ROMANIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS AND THE ENTENTE POLICY TOWARDS ROMANIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIRST BALKAN WAR

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Abstract: Romanian-Russian Relations and the Entente Policy towards Romania in the Context of the First Balkan War.

The study examines Romanian-Russian relations and the Entente policy towards Romania during the First Balkan War. Although Romania did not participate in the conflict, Russia paid special attention to its territorial dispute with Bulgaria. Based on the analysis of diplomatic documents, the author believes that the Russian diplomacy had a well-conceived strategy for a Romanian detachment from the Triple Alliance and its attraction of the side of the Entente, while at the same time managing Bulgaria's susceptibilities in order to not remove it from the Russian sphere of influence and thus determine it to join the Central Powers. To achieve these objectives, there was concerted action by Russia and France, while the English diplomacy proved less active. The author emphasizes the importance of Romania's strategic position, a state which gravitated in the political orbit of the Central Powers, while the danger of the extending Balkan war loomed, by the triggering of a war between Russia and Austria-Hungary, which could lead to entry into a conflict between the Great Powers located in opposing political-military groups, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. In such a situation, Russia attracting Romania on the side of the Entente had particular importance. In case of failure, the mere declaration of its neutrality was acceptable. Therefore, Russia supported Romania's participation in the Peace Conference in London, unlike its Entente partners, Britain and France, which had a negative attitude, being dissatisfied with Romania' strong links with the Central Powers.

Keywords: spheres of influence, neutrality, alliance, Balkan confederation, political strategy, status quo, geo-strategic position, independent foreign policy.

It is known that the orientation of Russian foreign policy towards the Balkans had a long tradition. Interrupted for a short period in the beginning of the twentieth century, when Russian expansionism aimed primarily at the Far East, this policy was resumed with greater force after the Russian-Japanese war of 1904-1905, but has shown some failures that are difficult to explain if we take into account the great effort that Chancellery in St. Petersburg made to achieve its strategic goals.

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Russian efforts to expand its influence in the Balkans faced resistance from Austria- Hungary. The essence of the Austro-Hungarian conflict lies in the slow contradiction which sometimes gave rise to forms of acute tension between the interests of the two empires to dominate the Balkan states, or at least to divide spheres of influence in this geographical area. Clashes of interests between the Russian Empire and Austria-Hungary evolved gradually and escalated to a military conflict in 1914. Since Russia's claims in the Balkans were often supported by France and those of Austria-Hungary usually had Germany's consent, one can say that the early years of the twentieth century until the outbreak of the First World War, the Balkan Peninsula became the center of powerful political pressures exerted by both political and military groups opposed to the Great Powers, the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente¹.

Despite efforts made to gain the confidence of the Balkan peoples, in order to then exploit it for its benefit, Russia did not always find sympathy that it counted on in the Balkans. It had lost removed, for example, Serbia's sympathy because it had not supported it enough in 1908, when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, but mostly because its policy towards Bulgaria, which it supported in the hope that it will be able to make of it an instrument which bowed down to tsarist policy². Through such a policy, Tsar Nicholas II sought to fix what the Russian diplomacy had broken during the reign of Alexander III, who, lacking in ability, had estranged Bulgaria by forcing it to turn to Austria-Hungary³. The signing of the secret military agreement with Bulgaria in 1909 can be considered a success of the Russian diplomacy in this regard.

In this context, Romania's position was particularly important for Russia's Balkan policy. Attracting it in Russia's sphere of influence not only would have created a bridge with the Slavic states in the Balkans, but it would also have considerably reduced Austrian-Hungarian possibilities of counteracting its policy in South Eastern Europe. The situation seemed to be favorable to Russia, especially after the "Bosnian crisis" during 1909-1910 when the idea of a "confederation" of Balkan states entered the field observation of the South East European states, because of their need for a union in order to resist an Austro-Hungarian penetration.

It seems that the Russian diplomacy in that period did not realize that Romania, although not a Balkan state, had its own interests south of the Danube and did not see the contradictions that existed in this respect between Romania and Austria-Hungary. Targeting Bulgaria in particular, Russia could not exploit the differences between Romania and Austria-Hungary in the Balkan matters. It is significant that in 1910 Sazonov believed that Romania was a "Danubian state and not a Balkan state" and that it had "no territorial interest in the Balkans"⁴.

¹ Ion M. Oprea, *Romania and the Russian Empire*. 1900-1924, vol. I, Albatros Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 47.

² Petre Mihai Mihãilescu, *România in the Way of Russian Imperialism*, Dacia Traianã Publishing, Bucharest, 1944, p. 320.

³ Ion M. Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁴ The Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (to be cited A.M.F.A.), Stacks 71 (1910), R. 15, f. 253.

However, this interest exited without a doubt, but Romania reserved the right to question its territorial claims only if changes occurred in the Balkan *status quo*.

A few years later, in January 1912, the perspective of Romania's entering a "Balkan federation" was proposed by Take Ionescu, who conceived a plan to create a Union of the Black Sea states, without any exception. The initiator of this plan believed that such a "Union" would be able to provide a period of long peace in the Balkans, and the primacy of Russian influence in the Balkans and Turkish affairs. In this way, according to Take Ionescu, the "problem of the Straits" could be resolved to the benefit of Russia and the Triple Entente. Take Ionescu also alluded to the plan in a conversation with R. Poincaré, whom he showed that he was very dissatisfied with the support that Paris and Petersburg gave to Romania⁵.

As is known, the development of the events was different. The Balkan Entente was formed under the aegis of Russia without Romania. Moreover, the attitude of the Balkan states engendered an anti-Ottoman character into the alliance, although Russia had initially conceived the Balkan Alliance as a tool to counter the policy of the Central Powers in Southeast Europe. Overestimating its influence in the Balkan states, their alliance "was overlooked" by Sazonov, thus causing a war against the Ottoman Empire.

The development of the First Balkan War in a manner favorable to the Balkan states, in a context of the deepening of tensions between the Great Powers that were part of two opposing political and military groups, the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente, imposed.

Russia a limitation of the support that the Balkan states counted on, both because of the danger of an expansion of the conflict and its insufficient military training. Russia rally to the idea of a "European Concert", actively supported by the French diplomacy, offered the Russian diplomacy the chance to contribute to restoring the peace. Thus Petersburg assumed an active role in the mediation plan.

Although Romania did not participate in the conflict, Russia paid special attention to its territorial dispute with Bulgaria. Based on the analysis of diplomatic documents, we can say that the Russian diplomacy had a strategy best designed to attract Romania on the side of the Entente, while managing Bulgaria's susceptibilities in order to not remove it from the Russian sphere of influence and thus cause it to approach the Central Powers. To achieve these objectives, there was a concerted action by Russia and France, while the English diplomacy proved less active.

The attitude of the Great Powers of the Entente towards Romania during the First Balkan War, believe were subsumed to the new general policy guidelines that they gradually adopted towards South Eastern Europe. What seems essential is the change in attitude of the Entente states towards the Ottoman Empire. If the revolution of the "Young Turks" in 1908 had originally created the conditions for the rise of Entente's influence in the Ottoman Empire, gradually, the Turkish government's intransigence in refusing to undertake the required reforms,

⁵ Ion M. Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

⁶ M. de Taube, *La politique russe d'avant guerre et la fin de l'Empire de tsars.* **1904-1917**, Paris, 1928, p. 278.

particularly in the European part of the Empire, led to a reorientation of policy of these countries towards the Ottoman Empire. If England and France had traditionally supported the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as a measure to stop Russian expansion in Southeast Europe, gradually, during the strengthening of the Triple Entente and the triggering of the full emancipation struggle of the people of Southeastern Europe under Ottoman rule, these great powers and reconsidered their position. Without giving up its reservation towards Russia's Balkan policy, England believed that, as the Ottoman Empire declined, it was necessary to support the independent South Eastern-European states. France, which had more specific commitments to Russia, although not willing to fully support the Balkan policy, believed that its economic interests in the Ottoman Empire should not be paramount in its policy towards South Eastern Europe, but rather its alliance with Russia. In this context, Russia saw in the Balkans a fertile ground to increase its influence. It is understandable why Petersburg accepted the changing nature of the Balkan Entente so easily, from one expected to be anti-Austrian-Hungarian to an anti-Ottoman one, especially since Entente's loss of positions in the Ottoman Empire was followed naturally by an increase in the influence of the Central Powers in Constantinople.

Therefore, as noted before, the interests of the Triple Entente and the Balkans coincided up to a point. This coincidence was a real power source of Romania's relations with the Balkan states. Promoting them was a major concern among conservative and liberal governments that have governed the country from 1900 to 19137. At the same time, however, it also encouraged and promoted Romania's relations with Great Powers of the Entente.

The main obstacle to closeness between Romania and the Triple Entente was its relationship with Russia. Although partially obscured by the years, the mood created in Romania after the Congress of Berlin, Russia's rule over Basarabia made Romania gravitate further in the political-military system of the Central Powers. It is true that by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Romanian-Russian relations had improved substantially, but stopped only at external forms of expression, meaning the mutual visits of politicians, the military contacts between the personalities and cultural exchanges. These expressions are typical of good neighborly relations, but however they were, they could not, as observed, even mitigate the obstacles between Romania and Russia⁸. Gradually, however, Romania's antipathy towards Russia lost its edge, perhaps as a result of establishing a new balance of power between the Entente and the Triple Alliance. Strengthening the balance allowed Romania to revaluate its foreign policy.

In such circumstances, it is understandable why during the First Balkan War, the Romanian government, aware of certain reserves that Austria-Hungary had in supporting its interests to the south of the Danube, asked for Russia's diplomatic support to persuade Bulgaria to become more receptive to Romanian proposals. To this end, Titu Maiorescu met with N. Schebeko, Russian Minister in Bucharest. The Romanian Prime Minister declared: "Once you completely remove the orders

⁷ Ion M. Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 33.

of the Treaty of Berlin, the legitimization of our Dobrogea border is removed, which has been imposed through that treaty and a new regulation becomes necessary. We wish this control create understanding between Romania and Bulgaria and even expect that such a settlement initiative to start from Bulgaria, which started the war against Turkey. In consideration for King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, we want to avoid any foreign pressure in this regard⁷⁹.

The Russian Foreign Minister responded positively to Romania's request to mediate the Romanian- Bulgarian dispute through Minister N. Schebeko, on November 2, 1912, but while it insisted on reaching an agreement with Bulgaria, it did not assume any concrete commitments. SD Sazonov told "Russkoe Slovo", the government newspaper, his view on the Bulgarian-Romanian dispute: "The European character of Romanian politics itself is an important factor that the Great Powers should cherish, as well as our neighbors in Romania [...] I do not doubt that Bulgaria fully understands the value of its relations with Romania and will not create a situation that makes Romania not keep its loyal attitude to the end. However, the Balkan nations should view Romania as a major political factor. The opposite would be an easiness that they cannot guess" 10.

The approach of the Russian Minister in Bucharest approach to determine the arrival in Bucharest of the President of Sobrania, Stovan Daney, for talks, was not followed by immediate results, because the Bulgarian government refused direct negotiations with the Romanian government and stalled. Since the Bulgarian government found no support for its policy from the Russian government, it resorted to attempting a connection with Austria-Hungary. The talks held in this respect between Count Berchtold, the Austrian-Hungarian Foreign Minister and Stoyan Danev did not have the success the Bulgarian side had expected, since Austria-Hungary could not ignore the German point of view, which was favorable to Romania. Without reaching in this stage an official assertion of differentiate viewpoints between Austria-Hungary and Germany on the issue of territorial dispute between Bulgaria and Romania, Count Berchtold still sought to spare Bulgaria, in order to attract it on the side of the Triple Alliance. He was not willing to remain consistent in the assurances given to the Romanian government. In the view of the Viennese diplomacy, removing Bulgaria from the influence of Russia would be an important step in undermining the Serbian-Bulgarian alliance, but at the same time a clear support promised to Bulgaria would have created animosity with the government in Bucharest. The development of the events showed that the "great dilemma" Austrian-Hungarian foreign policy, outlined at the beginning of the twentieth century, to support Romania's "Balkan policy" or to support Bulgaria, could not have a consistent solution in favor of the latter, that had been opted for several

⁹ The Green Book. Diplomatic Documents. The Events in the Balkan Peninsula. Romania's Actions (September 1912 – August 1913), in Titu Maiorescu, Romania, the Balkan Wars and the Quadrilater, edited by Stelian Neagoe, Machiavelli Publishing, Bucharest, 1995, p. 164-165. Report to King Carol I on 27 October/9 November 1912. To be cited as Green Book.

¹⁰ G.A. Dabija, *The Memoirs of a Romanian Military Atache in Bulgaria*, **1910-1913**, Bucharest, 1936, p. 210.

years before the fact. At the same time, as well noted, the requirement made by Count Berchtold to Bulgarian Sobrania's President Stoyan Danev during the aforementioned conversation to travel to Bucharest and open negotiations with the Romanian government was not really a clear position in support of the Romanian point of view, but an attempt at Ballplatz diplomacy to achieve its goal of reconciling with Bulgaria without losing its alliance with Romania¹¹.

The subtlety of the Viennese diplomacy did not escape the Russian diplomacy. Although officially the Berchtold - Danev meeting was presented as having the sole purpose of getting to know the standpoint of the Vienna Cabinet in the matter of the Balkan allies' claims towards Turkey claims, N. Schebeko, the Russian Minister in Bucharest, was aware that "In reality, this visit was the first indication of a rapprochement between Sofia and Vienna and had, therefore, to lead to a rupture between Bulgaria and its allies" 12. To counter this situation, the Russian government ordered all European diplomatic missions to exercise influence on the Bulgarian government to resolve by negotiations with the Romanian government the territorial dispute. In this context, a special activity was organized by Russia's diplomatic representatives in London, Belgrade, Vienna and Paris 13.

Russia's policy towards Romania in these circumstances was synthesized by N. Schebeko in the following words: "Romania was then at a crossroads and the situation required more effort on our part to maintain, the good provisions towards Russia that had been manifested lately" (author's note)¹⁴.

Thus, Romania's position during the First Balkan War was an important factor in Europe, which the Great Powers had to consider. Austria-Hungary and Russia, two great powers with direct interests in Southeastern Europe, belonging to the two opposing military and political groups, the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente, although for different reasons, supported Romania's position in the dispute with Bulgaria. Russia did it to attract Romania of the side of the Entente, but being careful not to lose the influence gained in Sofia, while Austria-Hungary did it to maintain the alliance with Romania, with the hidden concern of attracting Bulgaria on the side of the dual monarchy and thus make it Serbia's opponent. After all, both Austria-Hungary and Russia, had conflicting objectives, which imposed a much nuanced diplomatic approach to the problem of the Bulgarian-Romanian dispute, and the moment of clear final solution had not come yet. Therefore, it was preferable for both Great Powers mentioned to resolve of the dispute through direct Bulgarian-Romanian negotiations.

Direct talks were held in Bucharest on 26 November / December 9 1912 between Titu Maiorescu and Stoian Danev in order to appease the

¹¹ N.Gh. Căzan, Şerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *Romania and the Triple Alliance* (1878-1914), Scientific and Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1979, p. 330.

¹² N. Schebeko, **Souvenirs. Essais historique sur les origines de guerre de 1914**, Paris, 1936, p. 142.

¹³ Ion M. Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 54-55. The author discussed these approaches in details, utilising rare documents, of maximum importance, from Russian archives.

¹⁴ N. Schebeko, *op. cit.*, p. 142-143.

Romanian-Bulgarian conflict, but did not lead to any results. It should be noted that during negotiations, Stoian Danev proposed to grant rights to Macedonian Romanians: language, church, school, and the border "would not have to do with compensation or the strategic line", in exchange for a formal statement that no serious Bulgarian could not think of occupying Dobrogea. Titu Maiorescu did not accept, arguing that the border was drawn poorly during the Congress of Berlin and "the fall of the treaty leads to fall of the border" Given the failure to reach an agreement, the Romanian government decided to transfer the dispute resolution to the Conference in London.

The Great Powers in the Entente could not grasp that, beyond the availability shown by King Carol I of Romania for strengthening relations with them, some facts demonstrated that the Romanian ruler was still faithfully following a policy alongside the Central Power after nearly thirty years. In this respect, the visit to Romania of the Chief of Staff of the Austrian-Hungarian army, Fr. Conrad von Hoetzendorf took place from 16/29 - 17/30 November 1912 and was a true test of the effectiveness of Russia and France's diplomatic activity for deployment of Romania from the Triplicate system and its joining the Triple Entente. As is known, the Austrian general's mission was to determine the Romanian government not to deal with the representatives of Russia and France, but also to link with Romania through a military convention. In the view of the Viennese diplomacy, a military convention was also meant to strengthen political alliances, which were approaching maturity. Maintaining Romania's alliance with Austria-Hungary was deemed absolutely necessary at the time when the Balkan war threatened to become a European one 16. It seems significant that, in agreement with the instructions, Fr. Conrad von Hoetzendorf had to accomplish a goal: if a truce could not be reached between Turkey and Bulgaria, the Romanian government should support the idea of a military cooperation with the Bulgarians ¹⁷. The fact that Fürstenberg was advised not to communicate Hoetzendorf's objective to the Italian and German counterparts in Bucharest, as it could also not be known in Sofia¹⁸, illustrates the Viennese diplomacy's plan to carry out Balkan policy independent of the other two partners. It seems that only Carol I had knowledge of this aspect of Hoetzendorf's mission and the Romanian ruler may have been influenced by this exciting project of the Austrian-Hungarian diplomacy.

It is known that Franz Conrad von Hoetzendorf's mission in Romania was a "complete and exquisite" success for the Austrian-Hungarian diplomacy. During discussions with the Austrian general, King Carol I unreservedly promised that Romania will take part, in the case of a European war, "as a faithful ally of Austria- Hungary" 20 and the military agreement signed by generals Al. Averescu

¹⁵ **Green Book**, p. 166-167.

¹⁶ Ion Gheorghiu, *Relations Between Romania and Austria-Hungary between* **1908-1914**, "Studies and Historical Articles", 1968, nr. 11, p. 143.

¹⁷ N. Jorga, Comment la Roumanie s'est détachée de la Triplice, Bucarest, 1933, p. 23.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Osterreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914 (se va cita O.U.A.), Viena şi Leipzig, 1930, vol. IV, doc. 4719.

and Conrad von Hoetzendorf provided a common plan of mobilization in the event of war against Russia and Serbia²¹.

Although the Entente diplomats did not know the results of Franz Conrad von Hoetzendorf's mission in Romania, they clearly sensed that King Carol I will seek to act in the context of the "Balkan crisis" in accordance with the Central Powers' projects. This suspicion was strengthened by the fact that his visit coincided with the moment when Austria-Hungary Serbia opposed to Serbia obtaining an exit to the Adriatic Sea, and it was ready to unleash a war unless it gave up on its demands – a situation in which Germany was ready to support its ally²².

As a matter of fact, even the later statements of Carol I confirmed this political orientation. In a meeting with C. Blondel, Minister of France in Bucharest, held on 3 December 1912, the Romanian ruler expressed "hope to see peace maintained", and "did not hide the fears that the Austrian-Serb conflict created, in which Romania could be called upon to intervene (author's underlignment) and support the cause of Albania, where so many kuţo-Vlachs live"23. King Carol I emphasized in this context that "Romania cannot passively Albania's dismantling and will insist together **Austria-Hungary** (author's underlignment) that the autonomy to be awarded to this country should be within the greatest limits; Ianina must be its capital and its septentrional borders could not be lowered to Durazzo"24. Carol I advised Blondel on this occasion that his view was "firmly" communicated by the Romanian Foreign Minister, upon his orders, to the Serbian minister in Bucharest. Because Serbia was supported by Russia, King Carol I was argued this foreign policy decision: "We do not doubt the sincerity of the Russian government in its desire for peace, but fear the panslavist agitation [...]". At the same time, Carol I suggested to Blondel that it would be in the interest of peace if France "let Russia understand that it [France – author's note] will not be involved in a war for Serbia"25.

In connection with the visit of General Fr. Conrad von Hoetzendorf in Bucharest, Georges Louis, the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, transmitted on December 5, 1912 to Poincaré, the French Foreign Minister, the point of view of Neratoff, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister. He declared to the French diplomat that he "did not question the existence of a military alliance between Austria-Hungary and Romania." (author's underlignment)²⁶. At the same time, he tried to show that Sazonov had established good relations between Petersburg and Bucharest. Regarding the dispute between Romania and Bulgaria, Nératoff expressed the hope that direct negotiations between the two parties will soon begin, during the brief stops Danev would make in Bucharest on his way to London, where he would complete the peace with Turkey²⁷.

²¹ Conrad (Feldmarschall), **Aus meiner Dienstzeit. 1906-1918**, vol. II, Viena-Berlin-Leipzig-München, 1922, p. 363-364.

²² A.M.F.A., Stacks 21, Berlin. Political Reports, vol. 22, f. 175.

²³ **Documents diplomatiques français** (to be cited **D. D. F.**), 3^e série, tome IV, p. 633.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 633.

²⁵ **Ibidem**, p. 633.

²⁶ **D.D.F.**, 3^e série, tome V, p. 3.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 3.

So although the Russian diplomacy felt that a military convention had concluded between Romania and Austria-Hungary, it was nevertheless optimistic about the future Romanian-Russian relations. Instead, England and France seemed deeply disappointed in foreign policy adopted by King Carol I. During talks between the Great Powers to designate the place of the Conference that was to end "the Balkan crisis," which would be attended by representatives of the six major powers of the warring Balkan states and Romania, diplomats from the countries that formed the Entente could see the strong relationship between Romania and the Triple Alliance. During these negotiations, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy supported the view that during the forthcoming conference of the ambassadors of the Great Powers no Balkan countries should be allowed and only Romania should participate, on the grounds that "its interests are engaged in settling Balkan issues and it would not take part in negotiations between the belligerents"28. In connection with this, Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador in Berlin, advised R. Poincaré that the attitude of the Central Powers made his English counterpart to assert that "the Romanian government relations with the Triple Alliance were not altered by recent events"29.

Conscious of the importance of Romania's position in a possible conflict between Austria-Hungary and Russia, the tsarist diplomacy continued, however, even in those conditions, to intensify efforts of separating the Central Powers and Romania and attract the latter on the side of the Triple Entente. Since the presence of General Conrad von Hoetzendorf in Bucharest provoked outrage in St. Petersburg³⁰, the Russian diplomacy searched to counteract it by sending Grand Duke Nicolae Mihailovici to Romania, during the anniversary of the fall of Plevena on 23 November 1912. Officially presented as a courtesy to hand the baton of marshal of the Russian army to Tsar Nicholas II, the visit of the Grand Duke Nicolae Mihailovici³¹ aimed, in fact, much more precise objectives, of which the Romanian government was aware.

Thus, the visit of the Grand Duke Nicolae Mihailovici in Romania, held between 26 November / 9 December - 29 December 1912/ 12 November, had to have an important role. It was intended not only to counteract the effects of Franz Conrad von Hoetzendorf's visit, which, as noted, had caused great irritation in Petersburg, but to explore the ground and sense Romania's intentions in a possible Russian-Austrian conflict. Documents show that, if Russia did not attract Romania on its side, the desire of the Petersburg office was that, in the case of a war between Russia and Austria-Hungary, Romania should be neutral³².

In his memoirs, N. Schebeko recounts the main events of the visit. The Grand Duke arrived in Bucharest, accompanied by a numerous suite. He was received at the station by King Carol I and all senior civil and military dignitaries. From the

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 7-8.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

 $^{^{30}}$ A.M.F.A., Stacks 71/1900-1919, vol. 11, f. 142. Diamandy to Maiorescu, 19 November/2 December 1912.

³¹ On the visit of the Grand Duke Nicolae Mihailovici in Romania, see The Central National Historical Archives (to be cited C.N.H.A.), Russia Microfilms, roll 227, frames 3-17.

 $^{^{32}}$ **O.** *U.A.*, vol. 5, nr. 4990. The Maiorescu-Schebeko Talk, after the visit of the Grand Duke Nicolae Mihailovici in Bucharest, is edifying.

station, the King led the Grand Duke to the Palace, where he was received by Queen Elizabeth. In the three days of his stay in Romania there were a series of banquets and receptions in his honor. On 23 November, the marshal baton was handed to the king in a ceremony held at the Royal Palace. This ceremony was followed by an impressive *Te Deum* in the Cathedral in the presence of Russian and Bulgarian military delegates to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the conquest of Plevna. After the official event, there was a brilliant review of the troops. At a reception held at the Russian Legation, the Grand Duke had a meeting with leading politicians of the Kingdom. Schebeko presents this visit as a "new witness to Russia's friendly provisions and its desire to come closer to Romania" (author's underlignment)³³.

As evidence of the importance that Russia attached to the Romanian state in its Balkan policy is that the Grand Duke Nicolae Mihailovici proposed to King Carol I that Romania should enter the "Balkan Confederation", a proposal that the ruler agreed with, but on condition that he would have the leadership³⁴. Carol I's answer was, in our opinion, more short term, determined by diplomatic considerations. Moreover, it was not followed by external measures by the Romanian state in order to put this idea into practice. In fact, the Balkan states had formed the "Confederation" without Romania and even against it, in the case if would participate as an ally of the Central Powers in an armed conflict. In addition, without signifying a refusal, King Carol I's answer of acceptance but on condition that he should be the head of "the confederation" 35 created difficulties for mutual approval of the Balkan states, ably noticed by the Titu Maiorescu³⁶. Thus, in the same spirit, but in a more elusive manner, spoke Prime Minister Maiorescu, stating that "we must first see if it (The Balkan Confederation author's note) is viable"37. Under these conditions, the Russian's diplomacy attempt at attracting Romania in the "Balkan confederacy" remained unsuccessful.

The report made to the Tsar by the Grand Duke on his return from Romania summarized the contacts made. Therefore it was especially significant through some details and nuanced explanations of the position of King Carol I and some senior political leaders in Romania. Thus, after a conversation with King Carol I, he wrote: "My neutrality (in the case of a conflict between Russia and Austria-Hungary, a situation in which it was possible to extend the conflict – author's note) is possible … I could never raise the sword against Germany, against a Hohenzollern – that will never happen. Alliance and friendship between Romania and Bulgaria are possible, but no agreement with Serbia and

³³ N. Schebeko, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

³⁴ Emil Diaconescu, România and the Great Powers, after the Berlin Congress until 1914, Iași, 1937, p. 14-15.

³⁵ Titu Maiorescu, *Daily Significant Political Notes*, in Titu Maiorescu, *România*, *the Balkan Wars and the Quadrilater*, edited by Stelian Neagoe, Machiavelli Publishing, Bucharest, 1995, p. 52.

³⁶ "[...] unpleasant Serbian Court and difficult with the Greeks", mentioned T. Maiorescu. **Ibidem**, p. 52.

 $^{^{37}}$ **Ibidem**, p. 52. See the Romanian prime minister's answer in C.N.H.A. Royal House Stacks, file 16/1912, f. 13.

especially Greece. I am completely against any idea of a Balkan confederation" ³⁸. Prime Minister Maiorescu' position was summarized: "Neutrality perhaps. Romania would have wanted to stay out of anything, no Balkan confederation ... It would like to maintain the best relations with its three neighbors: Russia, Austria and Bulgaria, while keeping its full liberty of action"³⁹.

From the discussion with Take Ionescu, he stated his opinion that Austria was "in a state of complete disintegration", and his wish to make an alliance with Russia, but by action with caution in order to protect the monarch⁴⁰. I.I.C. Bratianu's opinions were presented in laudatory words: "Broad views of the man who feels that the time for him to take over is coming soon. Respect for the monarch, but regrets to see him so attached to indications coming from Berlin and Vienna" 41. The Grand Duke retained a critical attitude towards the government policy and the King: "It would be advisable for Romania to take a stand, make a more active policy and show its precise intentions. Romania must surely enter the Balkan confederation ... "42. During the meeting, Ionel Bratianu told his counterpart that in the case of a future war in which two opposing military and political are involved, Romania's sympathies would head to the Entente. It is significant that the Grand Duke asked Ionel Bratianu asked whether, as the future prime minister, he would seek to obtain Basarabia. He replied "... I cannot, even as an ardent Romanian patriot seek to want the impossible, but if I were in power, I would put the question of Transylvania first and I would do everything to get close to Russia. But I repeat, with the current king this would be very difficult, it might be possible with his successor (author's underlignment)"43.

It is obvious that Russian diplomacy efforts made by the Grand Duke in Bucharest, reflected the new orientation of Petersburg's foreign policy created by Sazonov in the relations with Romania. He wanted, among other things, to attract Romania on the side of Russia, but was not willing to recognize "the mistakes" made by the Russian government at the Congress of Berlin⁴⁴. Sazonov, however, tried to exploit the Romanian aspirations of achieving the national ideal by uniting the territories inhabited by compatriots across the Carpathians, which implied a benevolent attitude for the Romanian state, if not an outright support from the east⁴⁵. Equally clever was the proposal made by Russia through the Grand Duke, for Romania to join the "Balkan Confederation". The Balkan Entente had been created because of Petersburg and therefore provided an increased

 $^{^{38}}$ Lettres des grands-ducs à Nicolas II, Paris, 1926, p. 133. It can be noticed that in his report to Tsar Nicholas II, the Grand Duke Nicolae Mihailovici specified, in contradiction to the Romanian sources, Carol I's total refusal to accept the idea of a "Balkan confederation", a rather ambiguous expression for which we do not have supplemental descriptions in diplomatic documents.

³⁹ **Ibidem**, p. 134.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 135.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

⁴⁴ S. Sazonov, *Souvenirs*, Paris, 1927, p. 110-112.

⁴⁵ E. Diaconescu, op. cit., p. 19.

influence in of the Triple Entente in Southeastern Europe. Obviously, an action of Romania towards the proposals received would have meant a change, at least partially and officially, of its political orientation alongside the Central Powers, which, in those moments, neither the monarch, nor the Romanian Prime Minister were willing to make, all the more as the signs of a weakening of the Balkan states alliance after they had achieved their common goal⁴⁶.

The Grand Duke's visit to Romania marked a significant moment in the relations between Romania and Russia during the "Balkan crisis". It was, however, commented in the Bucharest newspapers especially from a negative position. This opportunity was used to evoke the fate of Basarabia, whose annexation had happened almost a decade before ⁴⁷. However, it was an opportunity for an exchange of opinions and another important step towards improving relations with Russia, although no future positions in the event of a general conflict were specifically outlined⁴⁸.

It is significant that in this context of improving relations between Romania and Russia, Petersburg expressed favorable provisions to Romania in the Romanian territorial issue with Bulgaria. The Russian attitude was differentiated from that of France and England who opposed Romania's participation in the Ambassadors Conference in London. In a note to Izvolsky, the Russian ambassador in Paris on 13 December 1912, Sazonov stated that "the danger of seeing Romania in meeting of the ambassadors supporting the Austrian point of view would be removed by the fact that its representative would be invited to only give explanations and state his wishes [...] without him taking part in the deliberations"49. Sazonov showed that, in case decisions would be made through a consensus of the members of the reunion, the Cabinet in St. Petersburg "would find it difficult to refuse Romania, a non belligerent party, the right to be heard, in the context and under the restrictions outlined above"50.

However, Romania's participation in the London Conference of Ambassadors was uncertain. Given that, as noted, the direct negotiations between Romania Bulgaria on November 25th 1912, between Maiorescu and Stoyan Danev, had failed, the Romanian diplomacy was concerned with polling the opinion of the Great Powers about admitting a Romanian delegation to the Conference. In this respect, C. Diamandy, the Romanian ambassador in Rome, had talks with the diplomatic representatives of the Great Powers in the Italian capital. The Austrian-Hungarian Ambassador declared that Vienna and Berlin gave full support to Romania's admission to the Conference. The Russian Foreign Minister, according to the Russian ambassador in Rome, made several objections that Romania was not a Great Power, but eventually said that it would not make a case of it. Italy did not state its point of view, but as understood by Diamandy from the

⁴⁶ Gh. Zbuchea, *Romania and the Balkan Wars.* 1912-1913. Pages of South-Eastern European History, Albatros Publishing, Bucharest, 1999, p. 78-79.

⁴⁷ **Ibidem**, p. 80.

⁴⁸ A. Iordacĥe, *The Political Crisis in Romania and the Balkan Wars*, 1911-1913, Paideia Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 196-197.

⁴⁹ **D.D.F.**, 3^e série, tome V, p. 71.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 71.

Austrian- Hungarian Ambassador, the Foreign Minister, San Giuliano, seemed less hesitant in this regard⁵¹. In fact, a little later, on 2 / 15 December 1912, Baron Fasciotti, Italy's Minister in Bucharest, communicated to Maiorescu, the Romanian Prime Minister, the Italian government's agreement for Romania to be admitted to the Conference⁵².

So, the Great Powers of the Triple Alliance supported the efforts of the Romanian government to have Romania admitted to the Conference of Ambassadors in London. Regarding the attitude of the Great Powers of the Triple Entente, positions were differentiated. As we have seen, if the Russian diplomacy finally agreed to admit Romania's conditional participation in the conference, France and Britain opposed, as they considered that Romania would support the viewpoint of the Central Powers in the debates. Grey's opinion, submitted by Sazonov, was that negotiations in the matter of the Bulgarian-Romanian border were to be carried out directly between Romania and Bulgaria, while the Romanian representative should be allowed to "give explanations to the conference and formulate Romania's wishes, but without the right to take part in the discussions" 53. France will adopt the same attitude. Later, Russia's allies also adopted a similar position, favorable to Romania's participation in accordance with the terms set out by Petersburg.

In turn, Romania performs changes of ministers in London and Constantinople, between C. Gh. Manu and N. Misu, for the purposes of diplomatic efficiency. The latter was sent to the British capital to negotiate with S. Danev⁵⁴. At the same time, it was necessary to spare the susceptibilities of the Great Powers of the Triple Entente in what concerned Romania's position regarding the Conference. It is thus understandable why, in a telegram sent by Prime Minister Maiorescu to N. Misu, the new Minister of Romania in London, he gave the following instructions: "If you are admitted to the meeting of the ambassadors, support the Romanian interests exclusively. Romania should not appear in London to be the trailer of another power"⁵⁵. Obviously, through these measures the Romanian government wanted to promote the idea that Romania leads an independent foreign policy and was willing to act only according to its own national interests, given that important decisions on the situation of states and people of Southeastern Europe were to be adopted in the London Conference.

In conclusion, we consider that Romania's geo-strategic position was of major importance for Russia and Entente's rise in influence and South-Eastern Europe in general. Particularly important in case of a general conflict, avoided by not participating in the hostilities of the Great Powers located in opposite political-military groups, it would be equally relevant in the context in which the

 $^{^{51}}$ A.M.F.A., Stacks 71, 1900-1919, Letter B, file. 11, f. 289-290. C. Diamandy telegram to M.F.A.. of 27 november 1912.

⁵² *Green Book*, p. 167-168.

⁵³ British Documents on the Origines of the War. 1898-1914, vol. IX, London, 1929, p. 285. Grey to Buchanan, 14 december 1912.

⁵⁴ T. Maiorescu, *Significant Daily Political Notes*, p. 53; also see Al. Marghiloman, *Political Notes*, vol. I, Scripta Publishing, Bucharest, 1993, p. 133-134.

⁵⁵ **Green Book**, p. 172.

Peace Conference in London new frontiers of the Balkan states were to be established. Therefore, Russia's political strategy of detaching Romania from the political orbit of the Central Powers and the Entente and attract it on the side of the Entente attract was accepted by its Western partners, France and England, although there were sometimes differences of position or degree of involvement in achieving these shared objectives.