

# ROMANIA AND THE TRIPLE ENTENTE (AUGUST 1913-JUNE 1914)

## Part I

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### **Abstract: Romania and the Triple Entente (August 1913 – June 1914)- Part I.**

*The author researched the orientation of Romania's external politics regarding the politico-military groups of the Great Powers, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente.*

*The study thoroughly analyzes the beginning of Romania's external politics reorientation towards the Entente, in the historical context of the degradation of the Romania – Austro-Hungarian Empire relations. Based on an analysis of the diplomatic documents, we present the Romania - France, Romania - Russia and Romania – Great Britain relations during August 1913 – June 1914, between the Treaty of Bucharest and the international crisis that ultimately led to the ignition of the First World War.*

*The author emphasizes the main factors that contributed to Romania's detachment from the Central Powers and to its external politics reorientation towards the Entente.*

**Keywords:** *Romania – France relations, Romania – Russia relations, Romania – Great Britain relations, external politics reorientation.*

The deterioration of relations between Romania and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, determined by the contradictions between the two states in Balkan affairs, but especially due to the policies applied by the Hungarian government in Transylvania, was accompanied by a state of hostility towards the Double Monarchy within Romanian society, which was sure to have an impact on Romania's future political orientation. The Great Powers of the Entente sought to take full advantage of this situation, since they wanted to bring Romania out of the Triple Alliance and bring it closer to the Triple Entente. The Russian and French diplomacies were especially active in this respect.

Even on August 14, 1913, Izlovski, Russia's former Foreign Affairs Minister, wrote to Sazonov: "*I have seen the fact that you have separated Romania from Austria as one of your political masterpieces. This has always been my dream, which I could not fulfill, however, or perhaps I was not capable of fulfilling*"<sup>1</sup>. For that moment, immediately after the signing of the Peace Treaty in Bucharest, his appreciation is perhaps a bit optimistic, but it is relevant for Petersburg's intentions towards Romania after the conclusion of the "Balkan crisis", which had marked an obvious detachment of Romania from its alliance with Austro-Hungary, even if this alliance had not been formally denounced. On the other hand, the appreciation expressed by Izlovski is also relevant in the sense that it implies Sazonov's alleged merit in this direction. Naturally, from this perspective, the statement sounds a bit exaggerated, because, despite the openness shown to Romania by Russia around and during the Balkan Wars, an undoubted result of Sazonov's policies, Romanian-Russian relations had not yet evolved towards a context

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<sup>1</sup> *Der diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolski. 1911-1914*, III, Berlin, 1924, p. 243.

that would help political gregariousness, and Romania's detachment from Austro-Hungary had not been a direct result of Russia's policies. Although exaggerated for that time, Izlovski's statement is much closer to the truth in the interval after the Peace Conference in Bucharest. Even those that were highly critical of Sazonov's diplomatic activity, *post factum*, ultimately admitted his outstanding merits in shifting the course of Russian-Romanian relations<sup>2</sup>.

The policy promoted by Sazonov turned out to be pragmatic and realistic, albeit not devoid of a bit of cynicism. In his memoirs, Sazonov briefly mentions the reasons behind his policy of openness towards Romania and the manner in which he saw as possible closer relations between Romania and Russia. While interested in bringing Romania in the Triple Entente, which would have consolidated Russia's positions in Southeastern Europe, Sazonov never lost sight of the fact that Petersburg's political option was faced by the strong resentment Romanians felt towards Russia's occupation of Basarabia. Seeing this region as a province of the Russian Empire, closer relations between Romania and Russia could not be achieved unless the Romanian government accepted this reality. The head of Russian diplomacy would not consider giving up this region except after a military confrontation, which would have obviously ended badly for Romania. In this respect, Sazonov notes: "*This outlook could not, obviously, come to pass unless there was a victory against Russia, which was beyond Romania's means*"<sup>3</sup>. At the same time, in Sazonov's views, this situation should have shown the political leaders in Bucharest to "doubt the political adequacy of a hostile policy towards us (Russia – author's note)"<sup>4</sup>. However, Sazonov continues, "***by coming closer to Russia and the other members of the Triple Entente, Romania could even muster the hope of achieving its national goal by taking over the five million Romanians under Hungarian oppression, who truly wanted to reunite with their brethren*** (author's underlining). *I believed that the role of Russia's Foreign Affairs Ministry was to dissipate the public opinion's prejudice and that of the Romanian government towards their eastern neighbor. We were supposed to try and get Romania to understand how misguided its foreign policy had been under German influence. I was, first and foremost, seeking to defend Russia's interests, by applying a policy of reconciliation with a neighboring country on which we did not have any claims, whose friendship we wanted to obtain and which, in its turn, could expect **serious assistance from us in the moment when its national unity would have been obtained once again following several inevitable events*** (author's underlining)"<sup>5</sup>.

Russia's policy towards Romania complied with broader projects of Russian diplomacy in Southeastern Europe. As stated, after the Balkan Wars, Sazonov showed the Tsar that Russia needed to apply a more active foreign policy in the region, also outlining the new tasks that needed attention from Russian diplomacy in those circumstances: the need to maintain the *status-quo* in the Balkans, prevention at all costs against a scenario where the Straits would fall into the hands of another power, defense, by any means necessary, of Serbia's territorial integrity, thus preventing the continued expansion of the Central Powers towards Southeastern Europe. In view of achieving these tasks, Sazonov's foreign policy plan involved the restoration of the Balkan Alliance against the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and this alliance would include

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<sup>2</sup> M. de Taube believes that, from the Russian perspective, Romania's detachment from the Double Monarchy, through Sazonov's ability, represents, maybe, "*the only real success his policy has registered in Europe*". M. de Taube, *La politique russe d'avant guerre et la fin de l'Empire des tsars. 1904-1917*, Paris, 1928, p. 303.

<sup>3</sup> S. Sazonov, (1927), *Les années fatales. Souvenirs ... (1910-1916)*, Paris, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113-114.

Romania as well. The Russian Foreign Affairs Minister saw Romania as one of the potential allies for the Tsar against Austro-Hungary, due to an increase of the “*irredentist current*”. As such, Sazonov set out, as one of Russian diplomacy’s future tasks, relations that were “*as intimate as possible towards Romania*”<sup>6</sup>. The head of Russian Diplomacy considered the fact that after the Balkan Wars Romanians had higher confidence in their own strength, and their “*irredentist aspirations*” started gaining ground, as Russia’s new ambassador to Bucharest, Poklewsky-Koziell, told Sazonov. “*These aspirations – the Russian diplomat noted – naturally turn towards Transylvania with its 3 million Romanians*”<sup>7</sup>.

The efforts made by Russian diplomacy to bring Romania alongside the Triple Entente were not overlooked in Ballplatz, nor in Wilhelmstrasse. As shown in the most documented work on Romania’s relations with the Triple Entente, Austro-Hungarian Embassy adviser Franz von Haymerle had reported on September 24, 1913 on several measures taken by the Tsarist government to improve relations with Romania, which resulted, according to the Austrian diplomat, in the appearance in Romania media of several articles meant to “*agitate regarding the lives of Romanians in Hungary*”<sup>8</sup>. The same member of the Double Monarchy’s delegation signaled at the end of December 1914 the significance of the speeches made by several officials, made at the farewell banquet thrown to honor Russia’s former minister to Bucharest, Schebeko<sup>9</sup>. Such evaluations from the representatives of Central Powers in Bucharest expressed a tendency, which would widen in 1914, to minimize the real Austro-Hungarian state of mind in Romanian society, as more and more manifestations claiming this attitude were seen as caused by the Entente propaganda in view of bringing Romania to its side.

In the time after the Bucharest Peace, French-Romanian relations registered an upward trend, as the two countries came closer together on a political level<sup>10</sup>. This situation was determined by the favorable attitude shown by France to Romania during the Second Balkan War. Even if Romania’s policy could not be seen as marking the beginning of a direction shift towards the Entente, still it represented clear evidence of detachment from the alliance with Austro-Hungary. This fact later encouraged the efforts of French diplomacy, and those of the Russian one as well, to bring Romania to the side of the Triple Entente, as Paris and Petersburg were aware that the vital interests of the Romanian state imposed a shift in its foreign policy. Here we should remind the importance of the fact that France directly opposed the revision of the Peace Treaty concluded in Bucharest, while also influencing the Russian government to take a similar stance. The stance taken by the French government was especially appreciated in Romanian political circles. It seems significant that in that context, beyond certain protocol requirements, the president of France himself, R. Poincaré, expressed to King Charles I, his firm desire for constantly closer relations between France and Romania<sup>11</sup>.

France’s steadfast stance of maintaining the Balkan *status-quo* carved by the Peace in Bucharest represented, without a doubt, the basis for the improvement of Romanian-French relations, which helped closer ties between the two countries on a political level. During a meeting between the Romanian king and France’s charge d’affaires to Bucharest, on October 19, 1913, the Romanian sovereign, after renewing thanks and

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<sup>6</sup> Gh. N. Căzan, Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, (1979), *Romania and the Triple Alliance (1878-1914)*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, p. 361.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 364.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 370.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> V. Vesa, *Romania and France at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1900-1916). Pages of diplomatic history*, Ed. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1975, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> *The Central National Historical Archives, Fond Casa Regală, Carol I, file 58/1913, f. 1 (to be quote as C.N.H.A.)*

gratitude for France's attitude during the Peace conference in Bucharest, expressed his fear that "*the peace is precarious*", as long as Bulgaria keeps wishing to revise, and, for this reason, "*for some time from now on it can only be an armed peace*". Expressing his wish for the peace to be maintained, the king "*alluded*", in this respect, to the "*precious contribution that a provisional agreement between Germany and France would bring to Europe*"<sup>12</sup>.

It is true that both powers mentioned firmly said the Bucharest treaty needs to remain final, which brought a great deal of satisfaction to the Bucharest government, as well as to the other victorious Balkan states. For Romania, the request, even if "*hinted*", for an "*agreement*" in this respect between Germany and France gains some particular connotations, as the meaning of this action goes beyond the achievement of a France-Germany agreement to guarantee the Balkan *status-quo*. We can hypothesize that, even though there are not clear indications in this direction, the king's initiative needs to be put in connection with the manner in which he saw the shift in Romania's foreign policy.

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<sup>12</sup> *Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914)*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, tome VIII, doc. nr. 352, p. 441-443. Greigueil to Pichon, 19 octobre 1913 (se va cita *D.D.F.*).

It seems significant, from this point of view, that, while detaching from the alliance with Austro-Hungary, a reorientation of Romanian policies towards the Entente could be conceived, in these circumstances, unless close relations were maintained with Germany. Obviously this alternative was difficult to achieve, since there were fundamental contradictions between Germany and the Great Powers of the Entente, and some of them were irreconcilable. This fact is interesting and, it seems, even though there are no documents to prove it, that this was the Romanian king's intention and that of the Romanian government regarding the shift in Romania's foreign policy after the Peace Conference in Bucharest. A report by the French charge d'affaires in Sofia, Dard, on November 2, 1913, to Pichon, seems to offer certain hints in this direction. The French diplomat writes that during a meeting he had with the new Romanian minister to Sofia, G. Deroussy, the latter told him that "**in Romania there are hopes of separating Vienna's policy from that of Berlin** (author's underlignment). *The progressive change of relations between Austria and Germany is closely watched. If, in the spirit of the German Government, added G. Deroussy, Austro-Hungary would be finally condemned one day, and if Berlin «winks at us», we will not hesitate then, to satisfy out national goals, to ask Germany for the support we would prefer to obtain from Russia right now* (author's underlignment)". From the conversation with Deroussy the French diplomat also retained the following statements regarding the priorities of Romanian foreign policy: "**Public opinion in Romania is completely distant from Austro-Hungary and the friendship between the two countries is nothing but a shell of its past self. Even in the tenacious spirit of the old sovereign there was a great change** (author's underlignment). *Out of respect for Franz Iosef, he wanted to maintain appearances and the trip made by the heir prince to Vienna did nothing but save these appearances. But the Russian marriage of Prince Charles was decided in the Court, under the pressure of public opinion, which wants sincere and durable relations with Russia. This public opinion guides from now on the country's foreign policy and the manner of despotism applied in this respect by king Charles so far has come to an end. The issue of Romanians in Transylvania and Bucovina will be the great national issue from now on, and public opinion shows new sensibility towards this issue* (author's underlignment)"<sup>13</sup>.

The achievement of the national unity goal, through Romania's union with the territories inhabited by Romanians throughout Austro-Hungary, involved, as said before, improved relations with the Entente, mainly with Russia, whose support was essential. At the same time, additional guarantees were needed for the maintaining of the *status-quo* south of the Danube, because changes in this situation could endanger the achievement of the national goal, through possible complications determined by tighter relations between Bulgaria and Austro-Hungary. In a situation of military conflict, Romania would have been in a situation to fight on two fronts. This is why the Romanian king's preoccupation to maintain the Peace Treaty signed in Bucharest, through a potential agreement between France and Germany, is fully explicable. The good relations between Romania and Germany could have determined the Romanian sovereign to think, in the case of a possible separation between Berlin and Vienna in terms of policies, manifested somewhat throughout the Balkan Wars, that Romania could obtain support from Germany. Thus, at least in theory, there was the possibility for some favorable circumstances for the achievement of Romania's foreign policy goals, with the help of the Entente, as well as with that of Germany. While such "*hints*" were made to the French government, there is no evidence that the same was done with the government in Berlin.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 433, p. 542-545. Dard catre Pichon, 2 noiembrie 1913.

We believe that such actions would have been inadequate in a moment when the fact that Romania was trying to obtain a loan from the Paris market caused displeasure in Berlin.

In fact, financial issues marked French-Romanian relations in the second half of 1913. The “Balkan Crisis” determined an increase in budget spending and caused difficulties in Romania’s foreign trade. The financial difficulties determined the Romanian government in summer and fall 1913 to try to obtain a foreign loan. The Romanian government tried to obtain a large loan on the French market, and some of the money would have been used to repay a loan granted by Germany in February 1913. The causes of this decision can be found in the improved relations between Romania and France and in the financial crisis faced by Germany<sup>14</sup>. Alexandru Marghiloman, finance minister, knowing the financial situation of the German market, which is why he wanted to turn to France for the loan, initially went, out of “*courtesy towards Romania’s old bankers, where Romania’s credit was insured between 1881 and 1913*”<sup>15</sup>, to the Disconto Gesellschaft group. The German holding, given the situation faced by Germany’s local market, could not satisfy the Bucharest government. In this situation, authorities went to the French banks. King Charles I agreed, but he showed reticence towards some of the conditions possibly imposed by the French such as the obligation to buy weaponry from France. Charles I knew that Germany would not have opposed a loan from Paris, since the German bank was unable to help, but Germany would not have accepted the situation if the French loan entailed the massive purchase of weaponry from French factories. Talks with various French banks began in fall 1913, and the Paris government, for political reasons, decided to support Romania to obtain the loan. However, the French government did not accept the repayment of the German loan with French money. At the same time, media and the economic and financial circles in France scolded banks for not making sure that the loans go to countries that buy French, citing figures from Romania’s foreign trade, which showed an orientation towards the Central Powers. Talks prolonged, but without concrete results. In this situation, the Disconto group reconsidered its decision and offered to guarantee a loan towards Romania. French political officials wanted the loan to come entirely from Paris, but French banks decided to offer only a small part, through Disconto Gesellschaft. As such, the loan could not come entirely from Paris, to the dismay of French authorities, which had set high political hopes in this transaction<sup>16</sup>. This was undoubtedly a failure of French diplomacy, which intended to bring Romania closer to the Entente through this loan<sup>17</sup>. However, this was a success for Germany. On November 12, 1913, the Romanian government signed an agreement with Germany through which the financial group represented by Disconto Gesellschaft in Berlin offered a loan of 250 million lei in gold, repayable in 40 years, with 4.5% interest<sup>18</sup>. Financial dependence to Germany represents an additional reasons for which the Romanian government wanted to maintain good political relations with Berlin.

Despite this failure to plan financial and economic relations between Romania and France, political relations between the two countries were open, even if looking exclusively at the contacts between officials of both countries. The relations between the two countries towards the goal of signing the loan deal were added with diplomatic efforts. Relevant in this respect is the visit made to France in September 1913 by Take

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<sup>14</sup> M.N. Popa, (1969), *Contributions regarding the Romania-France relations. 1900-1914*, “Studii. Revistă de istorie”, 22, nr. 1, p. 102.

<sup>15</sup> G.M. Dobrovici, (1940), *The history of the economical and financial development of Romania and the contracted loans 1823-1933*, Bucharest, p. 209.

<sup>16</sup> Al. Marghiloman, (1993), *Political notes. 1897-1924*, vol. I, edition and introduction by Stelian Neagoie, Ed. Scripta, Bucharest, p. 211-212.

<sup>17</sup> G.M. Dobrovici, *op. cit.*, p. 209-212.

<sup>18</sup> Gh.N. Căzan, Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 372-373.

Ionescu, a member of the Romanian government. On this occasion, the Romanian minister met with French President R. Poincaré. During the meeting, Take Ionescu reiterated the statements made in January 1913, by which “*you will never see the Romanian army in the enemy camp*”<sup>19</sup>, whatever Romania’s government might be.

On November 2, 1913, M. Paléologue wrote in his journal: “*I believe that after the Second Balkan war the Romanian government tends to emancipate from Austria and evolve towards Russia*”<sup>20</sup>. He felt that “*our entire diplomatic effort needs to be directed from now on towards bringing Romania closer, to aid its relations with Russia*”<sup>21</sup>.

A relevant fact, on the importance that French diplomacy granted to shifting Romania’s foreign policy, is the development in December 1913, at Quai d’Orsay, of a large document called ***Mémoire sur les Rapports entre l’Autriche-Hongrie et la Roumanie***<sup>22</sup>. Among others, the document writes that “*the desire to see all Romanians reunited under one national state, around the Kingdom of Romania, is the fundamental idea of the Romanian national movement and any Romanian with a bit of education supports this idea*”<sup>23</sup>. Naturally, for the achievement of such a political agenda, Romania’s foreign policy needed to shift towards the Entente.

While the Russian and French diplomacies were actively involved in bringing Romania on the side of the Triple Alliance, the British diplomacy had a passive role. This is due to the different type of relations England had with its partners within the Entente, which did not bind the British government in Southeastern Europe affairs. The British government’s interest was to maintain peace in this region of Europe and to regulate all differences between the Balkan states following the conflicts in 1912-1913. British diplomatic correspondence, very large in this respect, reveals these preoccupations of the Cabinet in 10 Downing Street. The correspondence regarding Romania considers almost exclusively Romania’s policy in Southeastern Europe<sup>24</sup>, and it does not point to a new direction in the relations between Romania and the Entente.

There is some significance, however, in the change of image Romania received in the perception of British diplomacy, since it is common knowledge that Romania was not very popular in British circles during the Balkan Wars. Several months after the restoration of peace in the Balkans, Sir George Barclay, the British minister to Bucharest, summing up the events of 1913, noted that not even the most optimistic of observers could foretell the dramatic changes favoring Romania, which “*came out of the Balkan crisis with greater moral and material profit. It regained a territory spanning over almost 8000 km<sup>2</sup>; it stated, under critical circumstances, its independence from Austrian influence and it widely became an arbiter in the Balkans, discouraging, at least for the time being, Bulgaria’s aspirations of hegemony*”<sup>25</sup>

Overall, it can be said that in the second half of 1913 Romania’s foreign policy registered new tendencies, namely the beginning of a new orientation towards the Entente. Surely there could be no talk yet of a rupture from its former allies. This rupture did not even occur in relations between Romania and Austro-Hungary, despite rising hostility from Romanian public opinion towards the Double Monarchy, which required a shift in Romania’s foreign policy towards achieving the national goal. In any case, the alliance between the two states remained caduceus. Romanian-German relations were

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<sup>19</sup> C.Xeni, *Take Ionescu, 1858-1922*, edition III, Bucharest, 1933, p. 278. See also Take Ionescu, *Memories*, translation by N. Baboeanu, Bucharest, 1923, p. 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> M. Paléologue, (1946), *Au Quai d’Orsay à la veille de la tourmente. Journal. 1913-1914*, Paris, p. 225.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 231.

<sup>22</sup> See *C.N.H.A.*, France Microfilms, reel 25, f. 237-247.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 237.

<sup>24</sup> See *British Documents on the Origins of the War (1898-1914)*, vol. X, part I, doc. nr. 5, 64, 315, 317.

<sup>25</sup> *C.N.H.A.*, England Microfilms, reel 253, F.O. 371/2089, f. 72.

not affected, but the tension between Romania and Austro-Hungary triggered some concern in Berlin, and the German government was focused on improving these relations. Romanian-Italian relations evolved in a convergent direction, as both states showed a tendency of detachment from the Triple Alliance system, but without coordination in diplomacy towards this goal. Romania's relations with the Triple Entente evolved timidly towards political closeness, with the emphasis placed on relations with France and Russia. The achievements, however, were minor, despite sustained efforts from the French-Russian diplomacy. Romania's foreign policy in the sense of a shift towards the Entente turned out to be fearful, hesitant and even contradictory. It will gain more coherence and vigor when the government changes, early 1914, with the appointment of I.I.C. Brătianu as Prime Minister, since Brătianu was known for his pro-Entente affinities.

The rich French diplomatic correspondence in the first half of 1914 stands as proof of the wide diplomatic dispute sparked between the two opposing political and military groups, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, who wanted to increase their influence in Romania. It also points to the important role played by France in bringing Romania towards the Entente and, in general, the upward trend registered by Romanian-French relations, favoured by the affinities of the I.I.C. Brătianu government.

Early 1914, the French minister to Bucharest, Blondel, informed the French foreign affairs minister, Doumergue, that "*there is a sincere desire of closer relations with France in Romania*" but, at the same time, some of the politicians, including people in the government, expressed their regret that the loan was not taken from France, "*which allowed Germany to once again impose its financial course on Romania*". Thus, Blondel warns Paris that, if France and Russia want to maintain their influence in Romania, which is meant to keep Romania away from the advice of Vienna and Berlin, "*there must be no new mistakes and all our efforts need to counter the projects of our adversaries*". Blondel, in talks with politicians, outlined the fact that the French government also regrets the loan failure and assured that similar requests would be received favourably in the future by the French. The French diplomat broadly informed Paris on the efforts made by the Austro-Hungarian and German diplomacies, especially Ottokar Czernin, the minister of the Double Monarchy, to maintain Romania in the Triple Alliance system. As a way to counter this scenario, Blondel considered influencing the Romanian government towards achieving "*a very tight alliance with Serbia, Greece and later ven with Bulgaria*". Given the deterioration of relations between Romania and Austro-Hungary and the anti-Austrian sentiment noted in Romanian public opinion, the French diplomat believes that "*we need to take this sentiment into consideration and act to maintain the advantages we have obtained over the past several years*"<sup>26</sup>.

In a new report by the French Foreign Affairs minister, on January 6, 1914, Blondel, reporting on the activities of Czernin and the Romanian-Magyar talks in Budapest<sup>27</sup>,

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<sup>26</sup> D.D.F., 3<sup>e</sup> série, tome IX, doc. nr. 15, p. 17-20. Blondel to Doumergue, January 5, 1914; see also C.N.H.A., France Microfilms, reel 25, p. 209-211.

<sup>27</sup> The I.I.C. Brătianu government came to power at a time when the Central Powers were making desperate efforts to maintain Romania's political orientation. Czernin's diplomatic activity in Bucharest was corroborated with renewed talks in Budapest between the Magyar government and the Romanian National Party in Transylvania. Under the pressure of Government circles in Vienna, the Magyar prime minister decided in fall 1913 to offer Transylvania Romanians minor economic, administrative and religious concessions. In fact, as noted, the count Tisza, was only aiming to unfold a diversion aimed at weakening the Romanian opposition in Transylvania, in a bid to get them to drop major claims, such as the acknowledgment of ethnic individuality for the Romanian community within Austro-Hungary. The count sought to show good will towards the Ballplatz diplomacy and to offer certain satisfaction to the Berlin Government, which were highly interested in the improvement of relations between Romania and Austro-Hungary. The Romanian delegates rejected the propositions made in Budapest and they stuck with the fundamental national claims, which showed that differences between the two communities in Transylvania



unfolded with the purpose of maintaining Romania's former orientation, considered concrete ways of foiling such attempts. He believed that French diplomacy, as well as the Russian one, need to value the friendship they enjoy in Bucharest, using "*the same weapons used by the adversary: financial support, industrial and commercial penetration, etc.*"<sup>28</sup>

On January 10, 1914, Blondel returned with new information on the propaganda unfolded by the Central Powers in Romania, pointing to the media campaign unfolded to undermine the positions of France and Russia in Bucharest. Russia was presented as "*a dangerous neighbour*" for Romania, while France, which refused to offer financial support, was accused of "*too much indifference*" towards the Romanian state. While Blondel was optimistic about bringing Romania to their side, the Russian minister did not hide his fears regarding "*the difficulties of the battle we are waging against foes strongly backed and encouraged by their governments*"<sup>29</sup>.

On the same day, Blondel informed Doumergue on an alleged treaty of alliance concluded between Romania and Serbia against Austro-Hungary. The news published for the first time by a paper in Petersburg, was reproduced in Romanian media as well as in the Austro-Hungarian one. Since this was a *maneuver* of Russian diplomacy, it surprised the diplomats of the Central Powers, as well as Blondel. The French diplomat doubted the truth of the information and said: "*The king, as well as the Romanian government, would not be ready to conclude it* (the treaty – author's note), ***since this is not yet the time for Romania to openly display its territorial aspirations for Transylvania and Bucovina*** (author's underlining)". Blondel concluded that "***if we strengthen this closeness between Romania, Serbia, Greece and, later, maybe, Bulgaria, there will be a complete evolution of the Romanian policy*** (author's underlining)". This seemed possible to the French diplomat, because "*despite their perseverant propaganda*", the Central Power diplomats in Bucharest are moving "***on a terrain that they have already lost*** (author's underlining)"<sup>30</sup>.

On the unlikely nature of an alliance between Romania, Greece and Serbia, French diplomacy took note when the Greek prime minister came to Paris in January 1914. Within the meeting between Venizelos and Doumergue, on January 14, 1914, the Greek prime minister informed the French head of diplomacy king Charles I's stance on the issue. He said the Romanian sovereign, whom the Greek government had approached with such a proposition, told him: "*This is an event that will occur one day, but we have to wait a while. Romania's relations with Austro-Hungary are no longer as cordial as they used to be, but my country is in very good relations with Germany* (author's underlining) *and it does not want to show lack of good will towards this power through such an act. However, it is not without outlook the possibility for such a three-fold alliance to become fact*"<sup>31</sup>.

Camille Blondel, in order to achieve a reorientation of Romania's foreign policy

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were irreconcilable. As such, Romanian-Hungarian talks were ceased mid-February 1914, without an agreement. Gh. N. Căzan, Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 387-389. For the development of the Romania-Hungary treaties from Budapest, see Liviu Maior, *The Romanian national movement from Transylvania. 1900-1914*, Ed. Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1986, p. 131-143. Also, Teodor Pavel, *The Romanians' movement for national unity and diplomacy of the Central Powers (1878-1914)*, vol. II (1894-1914), Ed. Facla, Timișoara, 1982, p. 116-118.

<sup>28</sup> *D.D.F.*, doc. nr. 22, p. 26-28. Blondel to Doumergue, January 6, 1914; see also *C.N.H.A.*, France Microfilms, reel 25, frames 593-594.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 53, p. 64-66. Blondel to Doumergue, January 10, 1914; see also *C.N.H.A.*, France Microfilms, reel 25, frames 595-596.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 54, p. 66-68. Blondel to Doumergue, January 10, 1914.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 109, p. 125-126.

towards the Entente, intensified his diplomatic contacts with Romanian politicians, with those in power as well as with those in the opposition. During a meeting with N. Filipescu, “*convinced partisan of closeness between Romania and the Triple Entente*”, the conservative political leader said, regarding the Romanian-Hungarian talks, that “*their commitment, ordered by Vienna, only seeks electoral success and the freedoms promised to Romanians in Transylvania will never be fully guaranteed*”. This is why, “*he left to be understood that he would rather cease the Romanian-Hungarian talks*”. Blondel also notes that N. Filipescu “*continues the campaign he has started to inform public opinion on the interested advancements made by Austro-Hungary in Bucharest, through Czernin*”<sup>32</sup>.

On the meetings held with Romanian foreign affairs minister Em. Porumbaru, Blondel informed Doumergue that Porumbaru gave him “*assurance that **all efforts tend to develop the friendly relations that unite France and Romania*** (author’s underlinement)”. In his turn, the French diplomat offered his support to facilitate closer economic and industrial relations between the two countries<sup>33</sup>.

On February 3, 1913, referring to the stances taken in Romanian media regarding the debates in the Hungarian Parliament on the talks initiated by Tisza with the Transylvania Romanians, Blondel wrote to Paris: “*The partisans of a Romanian policy ready for closeness with Serbia and Greece are openly rejoicing for the turn taken by negotiations with Tisza and they do not hide their hope that these talks will fail*”<sup>34</sup>.

As proof of improved Romanian-French relations there is the report issued on February 7, 1914, by the Romanian minister to Paris, Al. Em. Lahovary. The Romanian diplomat unfolded activities to convince the French banks on the importance of crediting Romania. This time around the offers were generous and there were no sorts of unacceptable conditions. Doumergue himself gave assurance in this direction<sup>35</sup>. Only days before, the French foreign affairs minister congratulated Al. Em. Lahovary on Romania’s foreign policy after the Balkan Wars. He showed that Romania’s success in foreign policy “*could encourage you to maintain **the directions you have so fortunately imposed on your policy*** (author’s underlinement)”<sup>36</sup>.

The head of French diplomacy showed such good will to all people who, through their position, could push for closer relations between Romania and France, as well as closeness between Romania and the Triple Entente. Relevant to this point is the statement made by Gaston Doumergue to the special envoy of the “Universul” paper, who was kindly welcomed at Quai d’Orsay late January 1914: “***I know Romanians love us and we only ask that we become closer. I cannot see why closer relations would not be possible, even on a political level*** (author’s underlinement)”<sup>37</sup>.

French diplomacy, given the general interests of the Triple Entente in Southeastern Europe, did not solely aimed at closer relations with Romania, but also a *Balkan confederation* along with Serbia and. This political alliance would increase the Entente’s influence in the region. However, such a format was regarded with reticence by the Romanian government. This is why Bratianu told Blondel that Romania’s relations with Serbia and Greece will not evolve in this direction. He said that “*The three countries agree to defend the Treaty in Bucharest, but there is no convention between us. As I have said before, Romania wishes to remain free in its moves and ready to intervene to*

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<sup>32</sup> *D.D.F.*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, tome IX, doc. nr. 181, p. 220-222. Blondel to Doumergue, 28 ianurie 1914.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 211, p. 265-266. Blondel to Doumergue, February 3, 1914.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. nr. 212, p. 267-268. Blondel to Doumergue, February 3, 1914.

<sup>35</sup> *The Ministry External Affairs Archive* (to be quote as M.E.A.A.), Fond 71-1914, E2, Part II, Madrid-Paris, 1914-1924, vol. 12. Political reports from Paris, 1914, f. 243-249.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 240-242.

<sup>37</sup> *C.N.H.A.*, France Microfilms, reel 25, f. 212-213.

*keep the peace, should it be endangered*<sup>38</sup>.

Thus, closer relations with the Entente were seen by Romanian politicians, including by the prime minister, through the scope of national interest, without engaging the Romanian state in the French-Russian diplomacy projects for Southeastern Europe. Romania's Balkan policy boiled down to maintaining the *status-quo* south of the Danube and it did not involve a system of alliances with the states in the region, under the Entente banner. In view of achieving the national goal, Romania needed freedom of movement, and closer relations with the Entente could only be conceived if the Entente could offer support towards this goal. This is why Romania's foreign policy shift would only be achieved with respect for its possibilities to solve *the national issue*.

As justly stated, regarding the Romanians' emancipation from Austro-Hungary, Bratianu was interested in easing this movement through a compromise, naturally acceptable, to avoid bringing too much tension in relations between Romania and the Double Monarchy until the Bucharest government made an adequate decision. As in previous times, he kept an eye on the PNR leaders, preventing them from pushing things as long as a complete shift in Romania's foreign policy was not possible. The Romanian prime minister sought closer relations with the Entente, in order to secure a good position when the balance of forces on the international arena would tilt towards the latter, while internally he would have no longer face opposition from the king, who was already very old<sup>39</sup>.

The conclusion of Romanian-Hungarian talks mid-February 1914, the increase of hostility towards Austro-Hungary rushed, however, a detachment from the Triple Alliance and a reorientation towards the Entente. Blondel informed the French foreign affairs minister in this respect, on February 20, 1914, that the failure of the mentioned talks will shift Romania's foreign policy. According to Blondel, some have even spoken of "*reconciliation, which would have finally or at least partially brought closer the Romanian element to the Magyar element in Transylvania, risks compromising Romania's national goal*"<sup>40</sup>.

Romania's foreign policy shift is expressed however, through statements of intent by Romanian politicians, based on discontent showed by the Romanian public opinion towards the situation of Romanians in Transylvania, who were denationalized by the Hungarian government.

Regarding Romanian-French relations, the political closeness between the two states was favoured by the materialization of several economic and cultural initiatives. Thus, in February 1914, the *Agency for French commerce* was formed in Bucharest, at Blondel's proposition. ON this occasion, Blondel wrote in his report to the French Foreign Affairs Ministry: "*I will not insist on the political interests that push as closer to a country meant to play a peaceful, but more prominent, role in the Balkan Peninsula and in the Orient; our commercial, financial and industrial relations with Romania are the most efficient means*"<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, early March 1914, several financial groups in Paris were sent to Bucharest to probe the Romanian government's willingness to accept a loan or perform financial operations meant to favour Romania's public works agenda. Talks were held with finance minister E. Constantinescu and with foreign affairs minister Em. Porumbaru, and the outlook was established for financial relations between the two countries<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> *D.D.F.*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, tome IX, doc. nr. 283, p. 367-368. Blondel to Doumergue, February 12, 1914.

<sup>39</sup> Gh.N. Căzan, Ș. Rădulescu-Zoner, *op. cit.*, p. 402-403; see also A. Iordache, *Ion I.C. Brătianu*, Ed. Albatros, Bucharest, 1994, p. 202-212.

<sup>40</sup> *D.D.F.*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, tome IX, doc. nr. 336, p. 427-429. Blondel to Doumergue, February 20, 1914.

<sup>41</sup> Apud V. Vesa, (1975), *Romania and France at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1900-1916)*. *Pages of diplomatic history*, Ed Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> *D.D.F.*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, tome IX, doc. nr. 396, p. 508-509. Blondel to Doumergue, March 4, 1914.

On a cultural level, relevant for French-Romanian relations is the manner in which conferences were held in Romania by French political and cultural personalities, and the creation in Paris of the *French-Romanian Committee*. The committee's president was Lacour-Gayet, member of the Moral and Political Sciences Academy in France. He said the committee meets to entice the French intellectual to hurry the closeness between France and Romania, to support the Balkan cause, as revealed in the Bucharest Treaty, to make the Romanian claims known to French public opinion from the double stand point of the principle of nationalities and of the new borders required by Romania<sup>43</sup>.

The conferences held in Romania by important personalities of French cultural and political life, such as Lacour-Gayet, André Tardieu, Stephan Lauzanne, general Pellicier and others, enjoyed real success within the Romanian public opinion. The French foreign affairs minister himself, Doumergue, thanked the Romanian minister to Paris, Al. Lahovary, for the warm welcome that Romanians had offered them<sup>44</sup>.

Preoccupied with tightening Romanian-French relations on multiple levels, with the purpose of shifting Romania's foreign policy towards the Entente, French diplomacy made great efforts to improve Romanian-Russian relations. The situation seemed highly favourable in this respect in spring 1914, when there were signs of political closeness between Romania and Russia. Blondel, thus, spoke in a report to the French foreign affairs minister, on March 17, 1914, on the political implications of the marriage between prince Charles and the Russian princess Olga, one of the Tsar's daughters. In view of preparing this marriage, the prince heir Ferdinand, along with his wife Maria, were to leave for Petersburg on March 19, 1914, accompanied by prince Charles. Previously, they would take a trip to Berlin. Blondel obtained some information from his Russian colleague, according to which "*Petersburg looks upon the projected marriage with satisfaction,*" but several people around the Tsar fear the daughter's reaction, since she is "*quite independent*". Even though Romanian public opinion looked kindly on this marriage, Blondel adds "*the partisans of Romania's old foreign policy look badly on an alliance that would bring Russia closer to Romania, distancing Germany and Austria. They do not neglect anything, in compliance with the Austrians, in their attempt to prevent the marriage from happening.*" The French diplomat notes the media campaign launched by Austro-Hungary in connection with this event, with the purpose of showing the Romanian public opinion "*the dangers presented by an alliance with Russia*". Austrian propaganda aimed to create distrust towards Russia, which is "*selfish and ingrate, pushing towards close relations with Austria, 'the only one able, through its advanced civilization, contrasting the intellectual inferiority of the Russian people, to favour the development of the Romanian people.'*" Equally, Austrian propaganda aimed to create an anti-French current, writing that France, "*taking advantage of the friendship with Romania, seeks to create a Russian-Romanian alliance, which would only profit Russia*"<sup>45</sup>. The information issued by Blondel is verified by the Romanian minister to Vienna, Edgar Mavrocordat, who also presents, on March 18, 1914, the great concern caused in Ballplatz by the projected marriage, which would have led to a Romanian-Russian alliance. "*I add here – the diplomat writes – that not only the media, but also the political circles here are highly worried about the political consequences of such a family alliances, which would put Romania in the influence sphere of the great Slavic state.*"<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> V. Vesa, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>44</sup> M.E.A.A. Fond 71-1914, E2, Partea a II-a, Madrid-Paris, 1914-1924, vol. 12. Political reports from Paris. 1914, f. 254-256.

<sup>45</sup> C.N.H.A., France Microfilms, reel 25, p. 236-237. Blondel to Doumergue, 17 martie 1914.

<sup>46</sup> M.E.A.A., Fond 71-1914, E2, Partea a II-a, Viena 1914-1924, vol. 24, Political reports from Wien, 1914, f. 13.

In order to evaluate France's foreign policy towards Romania, in those circumstances, we need to look at the statements made by Blondel, on March 18, 1914, in a report to Doumergue. The French diplomat wrote that over the past six years his main goal was to develop Romanian-French relations, so that the two countries "*could come as close as possible*". At the same time, he had been preoccupied with "*getting Romanians to acknowledge their political independence, to draw inspiration from their own interests alone*", so that "*they would no longer be docile instruments of the Triple Alliance*". On the other hand, Blondel adds, he was interested in improving Romanian-Russian relations, honouring the alliance between France and Russia. He adds, however, that this matter required a great deal of tact, given the continued resentment towards Russia within the Romanian society. "*I refrained – Blondel writes – from pushing them into the arms of Russia, from proposing new guardianship the day after they had just relieved themselves of the old one. [...] It is in the interest of our ally to skilfully use the circumstances to make peace with Romania, which is called to play a big role in the Balkans, so that there would be no play upon the legitimate susceptibility of a nation who has confidence in its future and which will seek, from now on, in foreign policy, to move in complete accord with its national goals*". Since he did not have precise instructions on bringing Romania and Russia closer together, Blondel said he would limit his actions to achieving "*French-Romanian relations as intimate as possible*"<sup>47</sup>.

The notes in Blondel's report were probably connected to the wide articles in Central Powers media, written in those days, referring to the role of French diplomacy in Romania, and, obviously, Blondel did not want his activity to be misinterpreted at Quai d'Orsay. Thus, with the headline ***The Role of French Diplomacy in the Balkans. France's influence on Romania***, "Kölnische Zeitung" published several letters written by its representative in Bucharest, where he wrote, among other things: "*Russia seeks to exploit the cooling of relations between Romania and Austro-Hungary following the latest crisis. The Romanian resentment after losing Basarabia has not yet disappeared, and this is why Russian diplomacy is using French diplomacy to find a way towards the Romanian Court. Blondel is struggling in Romania to achieve Russian goals*". The same correspondent presents the conferences held by André Tardieu and Lacour-Gayet in Romania, as well as the banquets thrown to honour the French guests. Prime Minister Brătianu and interior minister V.G. Morțun are depicted as "*outright Francophiles*". The correspondent concludes with a warning, saying: "*[...] Germany should closely watch these maneuvers, to gain favour from Romania*"<sup>48</sup>.

Viennese media announced in those several days the imminent visit of former Prime Minister Louis Barthou to Romania. "Neue Freie Presse" wrote: "*After the visits of Tardieu and Lacour-Gayet, the journey of a statesman of Barthou's caliber is proof of the French aspiration to further Romania's friendship and to set the terrain for a Romanian-Russian agreement. In any case, this insistence of making Romania a friend is proof of friendliness that will surely shed light on the future relations Romania will have with the Great Powers*"<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> D.D.F., 3<sup>e</sup> série, tome X, doc. nr. 6, p. 10-11. Blondel to Doumergue, March 18, 1914. See also C.N.H.A., France Microfilms, reel 25, c. 601.

<sup>48</sup> C.N.H.A., France Microfilms, reel 25, f. 260-261.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, c. 602.