

**ASPECTS REGARDING THE INITIATIVES OF ROMANIA  
AND YUGOSLAVIA TOWARDS ENSURING COLLECTIVE SECURITY  
IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD**

*Mihaela Bărbieru\**

**Abstract**

At the end of World War I, Romania and Yugoslavia were directly interested in keeping the *status-quo*. According to their interests, they developed objective directions for the external policy, fact that determined an active international policy. The political and military relations between the two countries, in the period 1918-1939, were permanently heading towards the common purpose of preserving their independence and sovereignty, stopping the possible and viable aggressors, in order to counteract the different actions that were meant to destabilize them. At the end of World War I, both Romania and Serbia were in the incipient phase of capitalist development. Being at the interference of Great Powers' powerful interests, the states from the south-eastern Europe had to take into consideration the complexity of the new created circumstances.

**Key words:** *External Policy, Neighbours, Strategy, Connections, Diplomacy*

The peace treaties concluded at the end of World War I brought Europe the emphasizing of contradictions between victors and vanquished powers, with profound changes in its political map. The Wilsonian program through its 14 points, instead of the expected peace, would lead to "the absolute failure of Allied policy"<sup>1</sup>. Europe was faced with new realities that would ultimately determine a new world war. Romania and the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom (Yugoslavia from 1929), recipient of sovereignty and territory completed through the judgments of Versailles, were forced, in order to keep their integrity, to seek new allies against the rise of revisionism, fascism and nazism.

In the interwar period, when relations between states deteriorated, Romanian and Yugoslav diplomacy continued to support the idea that Europe had no other choice but to understand the unity and indivisibility of its culture and civilization values, above the existing divisions<sup>2</sup>. Romania had, as objectives set, the recognition by the Great Powers of its territorial integrity and national sovereignty, objectives which have resulted in bilateral and multilateral treaties with neighboring countries.

The main objective of the Weimar Republic was determined by recovery of a traditional influences in the Eastern area and had as final aim the Germanization of Central and Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup>. The Balkans space was not ignored by the Germans.

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\* Scientific Researcher III, the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities Research "C.S. Nicolăescu-Ploșor" of the Romanian Academy, no. 68, Unirii Street, Craiova; tel: 0040251522652 / Assistant Professor, Ph.D., University of Craiova, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, Political Sciences Specialization, no. 13, A.I. Cuza Street, Dolj County, tel. 0040251418515, e-mail: miha\_barbieru@yahoo.com

<sup>1</sup> Apud Emilian Bold, *De la Versailles la Lausanne (1919-1932)*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1976, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Mihaela Bărbieru, *Relații militare româno-îugoslave în perioada interbelică (1919-1939)*, Craiova, Editura Aius, 2011, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Vernet, *La renaissance allemande*, Paris, Flammarion, 1992, p. 50.

Germanic hegemonic tendency disguised as economic penetration, aimed in reality the dislocation of Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland from the east-European security organizations. By including Germany in the Genoa forum (1926), the major Western powers hoped a soothing of German revanchist policy as Chancellor Marx asked: "It can be done the absurd plan Mitteleuropa by entering in the League of Nations?"<sup>1</sup>. In the German geopolitical conception, Eastern Europe was limited to the "block" formed by Soviet Russia and Germany, the Baltic States and Poland. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia and Romania meant Central and Southeast Europe. On the postwar geopolitical map of Europe, after the completion of Greater Romania, have also emerged other entities, blocking the German trend of expansion.

Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Greece and Poland, countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe, were interested in preserving the status quo, established at the end of World War I, while Bulgaria and Hungary led the revisionist policy in the area. Germany and the Soviet Union, states that flanked the above countries, were hostile to Versailles system, which link the security of the region to the capacity of Great Britain and France "to discourage expansionist intentions of the two-revisionist great powers and ensure system stability"<sup>2</sup>.

In order to defend against revisionist attempts, the new formed Member have been discussed since 1918 in London, the achieving of a new alliance and the joint fight against bullying. The talks between the leaders of Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Greece – Beneš, Ionescu, Pašić and Venizelos – will continue during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, when Take Ionescu presented the first draft of the future alliance, which was to be "a federation of a new type, hitherto unknown" and the signer parties thereto would have "maintained regular contact to coordinate their foreign policy and common positions towards third forces in all major international issues"<sup>3</sup>. Since Take Ionescu's project was not feasible in the international conditions of that moment, during the conference was discussed Beneš's project, which provided for the creation of a tripartite alliance with Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania, these three not having differences that would impede its conclusion. Discussions started in Paris were continued through diplomatic means<sup>4</sup> and resulted in the conclusion of the alliance between the

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<sup>1</sup> Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorie Centrale, Colecția Microfilme, Microfilme SUA, rola 467, seria 006-73, informarea directorului ministerial Köpke (*Auswärtiges Amt*) din 26 noiembrie 1926 (Central Historical National Archives Service, Microfilm Collection, USA Microfilm, roll 467, series 006-73, informing of the ministerial Director Köpke (*Auswärtiges Amt*) of November 26, 1926). The concept of *Mitteleuropa*, from a historical perspective, represented a strategy for Europe in 1914, which, among other documents, was included in the program of the German Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, program called "September Plan". The program proposed an economic and customs union of the regions of Central Europe. Germany was the supreme force, and besides Austria and Hungary were also included Luxembourg, Belgium, Baltic Sea and Poland. Designed as a plan that ensures German hegemony over this part of the continent, however, was thwarted by the outcome of World War I, which, adversely to Central Powers, resulted in strengthening national states based on the system established by peace treaties.

<sup>2</sup> See Academia Română, *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VIII, *România întregită (1918-1940)*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2003, p. 430.

<sup>3</sup> Milan Vanku, *Mica Înțelegere și politica externă a Iugoslaviei 1920-1938*, București, Editura Politică, 1979, pp. 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

three countries, followed by military conventions. Little Entente was the first regional alliance of post-war Europe. At that time, it was an important factor of political stability and economic cooperation in Central and South-East Europe<sup>1</sup>.

At the beginning of 1921, encouraged by the policy pursued by France against the monarchy's restoration<sup>2</sup>, Charles IV returned to Hungary. Europe was alarmed and the Little Entente was not prepared to face such a challenge. At that time there was only the alliance between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. As one of the successor countries of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italy was not interested in restoring the Habsburg monarchy. She had signed an anti-Habsburg alliance with Yugoslavia at Rapallo in November 1920<sup>3</sup>. To stop the return to power of Charles IV, Yugoslavia announced through its ambassador in Budapest, Milojevic, that will use forceful means and will even resort to arms if necessary. Milojevic had diplomatic consultations with representatives of Romania, Czechoslovakia, Italy, France and Great Britain in Budapest on future actions aimed at preventing the return of the monarchy. French and British diplomats have called for action rather moderate, and Romania, which was not yet a signatory to the Little Entente, aligned to Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia policies, countries that advocated the expulsion of Charles IV of Hungary<sup>4</sup>. At the request of the governments of Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia, Ambassadors Conference adopted the decision of Charles disposal, the Hungarian government having no choice but to accept it. Following this event, the final formation of the Little Entente was more dynamic. Bilateral agreements between the three signatory countries resulted in the establishment of a political alliance which will be a bulwark against the restoration of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, against attempts to revise the treaties and against possible attacks on allies. However, the idea of restoring the monarchy was not abandoned, Charles returning in October 1921. Little Entente states actions against him were more intense, it was decreed a partial mobilization of the army, were initiated diplomatic activities towards Italy, France and Great Britain asking the removal of Charles, and even threatened with armed attacks if he would take power<sup>5</sup>.

The opinions expressed by Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardelean, treaties which Little Entente has concluded were equally evidence for the defense of the integrity and independence, a line against revisionism, an alliance to ensure the status quo in the Balkans, but especially a historical experience through the creation of a continental zone on the European political arena<sup>6</sup>. In fact, by the conclusion of negotiations between the three countries was achieved a threefold political and military power<sup>7</sup>. Dynamic and persevering common actions of the Members of Little Entente, which prompted the exile

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Briand see the former Habsburg dynasty as the only able to coordinate the lost peoples and to strengthen defences against German expansion; for details, see Pierre Renouvin, *Histoire des relations internationales 1914-1929*, vol. VII, Paris, 1957, pp. 281-282.

<sup>3</sup> Milan Vanku, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> It was believed that his presence can lead to the outbreak of a war; see also Milan Vanku, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 28-31.

<sup>6</sup> Mircea Mușat, Ion Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, vol. II, Partea I, 1918-1933, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986, pp. 1015-1016.

<sup>7</sup> Marusia Cîrstea, *Mica Înțelegere și atașății militari români la Praga și Belgrad*, în "Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques", No. 30-31/2011, Craiova, Editura Universitaria, p. 18.

of Charles IV on the island of Madeira, where he died a year later, had the desired results and proved that the future should be taken into account this alliance in Central Europe. France, one of the powers that did not look sympathetically the Little Entente, has reconsidered its position and foreign policy towards the component states, Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, depending on its future interests<sup>1</sup>.

The security of Yugoslavia was particularly enhanced by signing the Treaty of Friendship with France in 1927. At the same time, Yugoslavia joined, along with Romania and other countries, international conventions and acts such as Briand-Kellogg Pact, Convention on defining the aggressor or the Locarno and Geneva Agreements etc. Yugoslav diplomacy, in the conception of this State's military experts, supported the measures envisaged by Titulescu on economic and military level and on tightening the links between members of the Little Entente and then of the Balkan Entente<sup>2</sup>. In this context regional political-military, between 1919-1939 Romania has named five military attach in Belgrade: Colonel Dumitru Moțaș (1919-1927), Colonel Constantin Miltiade (1927-1928), Maior Alexandru Pastia (1928-1930), Lt. Colonel Ilie Crețulescu (1931-1937), Lt. Colonel Alexandru Idieru (1937-1939)<sup>3</sup>.

Strategy that Romania and the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom needed in their foreign policy to sustain and achieve goals and objectives, was defined by two of the illustrious politicians of the time, Nicolae Titulescu and Bogoliub Jéftić. In a press statement in front of Romanian and foreign journalists present in Bucharest on 11 July 1927, Titulescu, at the beginning of his first mandate at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out: "In Romania the perfect concordance between Romanian and European interests is dominant. All past and future political acts of Romania are explained and will be explained in this key feature ... Romania is hungry for peace"<sup>4</sup>. Yugoslavia had even more need for peace and stability, both internally and externally. Faced with numerous internal contradictions caused by ethnic tensions and social shortcomings aggravated by the economic crisis, King Alexander promulgated in 1931, a new constitution aimed "to recover, at least in part, the country's credibility abroad, especially in France, his old ally"<sup>5</sup>. Political factors were divided into two camps: the first, represented by the right wing, chauvinist and anti-Serbian, with strong fascist leanings, found refuge in Vienna, giving rise to "*ustaša*" movement (the rebels) led by Ante Pavelić; the second, consisting of representatives of the Peasant Party, supported the autonomy of Croatia, advocating for closer ties with France, UK and USA<sup>6</sup>. In the context of the economic crisis, trade relations between Yugoslavia and Germany have improved during 1932. In these circumstances occurred, between 1932-1933, the Zagreb Manifesto signed by numerous Croatian and Serbian opposition representatives from Bosnia and Vojvodina, protesting against the dictatorship of King Alexander, demanding a return to the status quo in 1918 and refusing Serbian domination<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Eliza Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, București, Editura Științifică, 1968, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Mihaela Bărbieru, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>3</sup> Marusia Cîrstea, *art. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolae Titulescu, *Opera politico-diplomatică. Iulie 1927 – iulie 1928, partea I*, București, Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2003, p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> Stefano Bianchini, *Problema iugoslavă*, București, Editura Bic All, 2003, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>7</sup> Mihaela Bărbieru, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

After the German Nazis took over power, the states of the Little Entente, alarmed by the aggressive expansionist policy, understand that there must be a common goal for common defense. Ruling political authorities of Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia understood that relations in Southeast Europe and the Balkans will be determined sooner or later by the reactivation of the revisionist forces in Hungary and Bulgaria. As a result of the new situation outlined in 1933, the foreign ministers of the three countries signed in Geneva the Pact on the organization of the Little Entente. Against this pact a real anti-campaign was triggered by the Nazi press, the Hortist revisionist circles and even the head of Government in Italy, Mussolini, adopted a virulent stance. Hitler said to the Romanian Minister in Berlin that "Little Entente is constantly against us"<sup>1</sup>.

Before signing the Treaty in Athens, the Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, Jéftić, highlight on 21 December 1933, that the politics of Little Entente and Balkan Entente "aims at collaboration and understanding among the peoples whose main goal is the preservation of peace, necessary both in the Balkans and Central Europe"<sup>2</sup>. Anti-revisionist policy and anti-fascist Romanian was based on the fact that the borders of Central Europe constituted a process completed, not one that was about to start, and to "any attempt to update it we will answer: *res judicata*"<sup>3</sup>. Nicolae Titulescu, referring to the process of revising the boundaries, highlighted the dangers of this phenomenon for European peace and security: "Talking about revision is to scatter and not to associate forces that must work together for the common concepts defense ... No the revision of the Treaties needs humanity but their own judgments revision"<sup>4</sup>.

Penetration of Mussolini in Albania, the tendency to favor the birth of independent Croatia, financing the "*ustaša*" movement by Italy aimed at disintegration of Yugoslavia in order to obtain Dalmatia. The assassination of King Alexander in October 1934, during an official visit to France, by the "ustashes" of Ante Pavelić and the terrorists of Vmro supported by Italian and Hungarian authorities, was followed by the establishment of a regency headed by Prince Pavle and a government headed by Milan Stojadinović. Although Great Britain and France had shown willingness to support diplomatically Belgrade government against the aggressive policy of Germany, Prince Pavle and his cabinet understood that the two great powers could do nothing concrete for his country, which is why they tried to expand and strengthen bilateral relations, especially with members of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente<sup>5</sup>.

Romania and Yugoslavia condemned repeatedly the acts of terrorism and assassination promoted by totalitarian states.

After Germany left the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference in October 1933, its relations with Romania and Yugoslavia in terms of foreign policy were tinted. Until the coming of Nazi, Yugoslavia's relations with Germany were located within

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<sup>1</sup> Apud Cristian Popișteanu, *România și Antanta Balcanică*, București, Editura Politică, 1968, pp. 112-113; Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al României, București, fond Mica Înțelegere – Conferințe 1933, ff. 116-121 (Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign, Bucharest, Little Entente Fund – 1933 Conferences, folios 116-121, hereinafter cited as A.M.A.E.R.).

<sup>2</sup> Cristian Popișteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 156; A.M.A.E.R., fond Înțelegerea Balcanică, vol. III, f. 324 (Balkan Entente Fund, vol. III, folio 324).

<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Titulescu, *Discursuri*, București, Editura Științifică, 1967, p. 417.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, *Documente diplomatice*, București, Editura Politică, 1967, p. 352.

<sup>5</sup> Stefano Bianchini, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

the fair limits, neither of the two states manifested any express desire of getting closer, but since January 1933, boosted by King Alexander I, the Yugoslav government acted towards a rapprochement between the two countries. In order to stop Anschluss Yugoslav government instructed its ambassador in Budapest, Iovan Ducič, to explore the Hungarian political opinion about the formation of a united front between Hungary, Yugoslavia and Italy in this respect. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian state, Kany, rejected the Belgrade proposal. A report of the Romanian General Staff to the Prime Minister stated “changes in attitude of military representatives of Belgrade, arising at the meeting in November 1933”<sup>1</sup>. This was the moment when Nazi Germany systematically cultivated “an atmosphere conducive to attracting Yugoslavia within its politics”<sup>2</sup>.

Power relations of the world have undergone important changes after the economic crisis. On February 9, 1934 in Athens, was signed the Balkan Entente Pact by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey. The aim of this regional institution was to safeguard the security of “all Balkan frontiers”. The pact also provided not to take “any political action towards any other Balkan country signatory to this Agreement without the prior mutual opinion and not taking any political obligation towards any other Balkan country without the consent of the other Contracting Parties”<sup>3</sup>.

In 1934 Yugoslavia refused diplomatic relations with the Kremlin regime<sup>4</sup>, and after the death of King Alexander, internal national contradictions and aggressiveness of some neighbors have determined a new course of its foreign policy. Economic and political rapprochement was initiated toward Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary, as well as toward countries that were controlled by Hitler. Governments led by Bogoljub Jéftić and Milan Stojadinović pleaded for a position of neutrality between the German and French block saying: “in case of a war between Germany and France, Yugoslavia would remain neutral”<sup>5</sup>. Belgrade’s attitude caused “stupor in political and military circles in Bucharest”<sup>6</sup>, which considered it an action that “helped to stimulating aggressive policy of Hungary and Bulgaria” and “inevitably weakened the military capacity for action and the prestige of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente”<sup>7</sup>.

In August 1935 a Yugoslav-Turkish meeting took place in which it was decided keeping a tripartite military conference in Belgrade in November 1935 after the conference of the Little Entente. This project was supported by Romania and Yugoslavia, whose aims was “the tendency to harmonize the operations of the Little Entente with those which were to be developed in the laboratories of the Balkan Entente, in case of a

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<sup>1</sup> Arhivele Militare Române, Pitești, fond 449, dosar nr. 73/1933, f. 212 (Romanian Military Archives, Pitești, fund 449, file no. 73/1933, folio 212, hereinafter cited as A.M.R.).

<sup>2</sup> Vasile Rămneanțu, *Istoricul relațiilor româno-îngoslave în perioada interbelică*, Timișoara, Editura Mirton, 2006, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> A.M.A.E.R., fond Înțelegerea Balcanică, dosar nr. 38, f. 35 (Balkan Entente Fund, file no. 38, folio 35).

<sup>4</sup> Gheorghe Zbucnea, *Istoria Îngoslaviei*, București, Editura Corint, 2001, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Milan Vanku, *Mica Înțelegere și politica externă a Îngoslaviei, 1920-1938*, București, Editura Politică, 1979, p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> A.M.R., fond 612, dosar nr. 862, f. 127 (fund 612, file no. 862, folio 127).

<sup>7</sup> A.M.A.E.R., fond România, dosar nr. 352, f. 224 (Romania Fund, file no. 352, folio 224).

general conflict”<sup>1</sup>. The Report no. 1309 of 12 October 1935 made by the General Staff to the Prime Minister of the Romanian Government stressed that, in the case of a general conflict, “Hungary is the subject on which Yugoslavia and Romania should focus particularly”<sup>2</sup>. The document was also referring to Turkey’s role “in Bulgaria’s removal from the battlefield” in order “to give the freedom of action to Romania and Yugoslavia”<sup>3</sup>. The Romanian and Yugoslav point of view was not accepted by Turkey, which considered the Balkan Entente “a factor which is likely to take charge of security in the Balkans, while Turkish forces were engaged in Eastern Mediterranean”<sup>4</sup>. Military experts from Romania and Yugoslavia saw the Balkan Entente “as a natural extension of the alliances system of Central Europe”, a “safety of the back of Little Entente’s device”<sup>5</sup>.

Titulescu was one of the “militant supporters of collective security”<sup>6</sup>. Collective security policy was promoted by the Soviet Union and France, in the context where the French leaders relied on close cooperation with the Soviets in European politics. Political decision factors in these countries, noting that Berlin leaders did not want to continue cooperation in the first postwar decade, were obliged to apply “the exchange option”. Stalin decided to cooperate with Western democracies in order to defend the Versailles system, appealing even to the secret services of the Comintern<sup>7</sup>. Switching to “popular front” formula was appreciated by a number of European countries, considering it as a “fundamental change in the politics of the Soviet state”. Receiving USSR in the League of Nations (September 18, 1934), signing the Treaty of Mutual Assistance between France and the USSR (May 2, 1935), the conclusion of the treaty between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union (May 15, 1935) boosted alliances in South-Eastern Europe, which made Titulescu to talk about a new basis “of the future organization of security in Europe”<sup>8</sup>.

The interests of the Little Entente members were seriously affected by the conciliatory nature of the politics of France and Great Britain for the purpose of supporting the trends of Italian domination in Central Europe and in the Balkans, hoping thus to an isolation of Italy from Nazi Germany. Regarding the issue of Anschluss, Titulescu said in 1934, in Belgrade, that “Little Entente will not hesitate as of two evils to choose the least in his eyes, that’s Anschluss”<sup>9</sup>. France’s representative denied that Italy had the approval of France, but Titulescu said that, with or without the permission of the two great Western powers, Italy pursued a policy which he considered very dangerous for peace. Being anxious because of the revisionist pressures of Italy, Romania’s foreign policy had the purpose of maintaining peace treaties, respecting faithfully the existing alliances, preserving good relations with neighboring countries and strengthening ties with

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<sup>1</sup> A.M.R., fond 948, Secția III, dosar nr. 41/1935, f. 23 (fund 948, Section III, file no. 41/1935, folio 23).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, dosar nr. 1608/1935, f. 96 (file no. 1608/1935, folio 96).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 156 (folio 156).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, dosar nr. 41/1935, f. 134 (file no. 41/1935, folio 134).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 201 (folio 201).

<sup>6</sup> *Istoria Românilor...*, p. 482.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Koch, *Sfârșitul inocenței*, București, 1997, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Apud Viorica Moisuc, *Istoria relațiilor internaționale până la mijlocul secolului al XX-lea*, București, 2002, p. 234; Mihaela Bărbieru, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>9</sup> *Documents Diplomatiques Françaises* (hereinafter cited as DDF), 1-ère série, tome 5, doc. no. 405.

the Little Entente and Poland<sup>1</sup>. Constantin I.C. Brătianu, referring to the Romanian foreign policy and its purpose, showed the need to “organize powerfully our country in peacetime, to retain the full confidence of our allies, and to impose respect to our opponents, in order to determine them not to speak about the revision of the Treaties”<sup>2</sup>.

The fascist and revisionist danger determined the union of political democratic forces in our country in a common front to fight the aggressor and to defend peace and the territorial status-quo. Among the measures of military order that the Romanian State understand that must be taken, was the visit in Romania, at the invitation of Tătărescu, of the secret mission led by General Victor Pétin, between 3-8 April 1934. Following discussions between the Romanian and the French side, Pétin has consented to support the effort of endowment of the Romanian army<sup>3</sup>.

In the following period, due to international developments, were taken effective measures to support South East European states. In March 1935 Germany denounced the clauses of the Versailles Treaty, annexed the Saar and reestablished military aviation, thus passing to the reconstruction of a threatening military force<sup>4</sup> that will endanger world peace. European countries have seen thus jeopardized their national independence. The resolution adopted in April 1935 at the Stresa Conference of the three major Western powers (Britain, France, Italy) could not reassure the nations awaiting resolute measures to put an end to the rampaging policy of Germany<sup>5</sup>.

In mid 1935, collective security policy has received a new blow, when on June 18 was signed in London the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, an act through which the English government broke up the fragile “front” formed in Stresa to counteract the Nazi danger. The agreement has had strong military and political meanings, directly advantaging the German policy of arming and affirmation of revisionism<sup>6</sup>.

New situation, that the League of Nations could not resist the aggressive policy of fascist states, caused serious problems to small and medium-sized states. The Entente, organized as an instrument of diplomacy for maintaining the status quo, “was directed against Hungary and Bulgaria. It was not, therefore, appropriate to promote inter-Balkan reconciliation or the general Eastern European conciliation”<sup>7</sup>. Its creation has only managed for a brief period to maintain the existing boundaries against Bulgaria’s protests. The Balkan States have proven unable to find a solid basis of mutual defense and cooperation in an era of relative peace and safety.

With the rise of Nazism and Fascism, the small and medium states were forced to adapt their foreign policy. In this respect, Romania tried to rely, although insufficient, on

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<sup>1</sup> *România și revizuirea tratatelor. Discursurile d-lor Iuliu Maniu și C.I.C. Brătianu în ședința Adunării Deputaților din 4 aprilie 1934. Răspunsul d-lui N. Titulescu, ministrul afacerilor străine, în Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului*, Imprimeria Națională, București, 1934, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>3</sup> DDF, 1-ère série, tome 6, doc. no. 70.

<sup>4</sup> On April 16, 1935 Germany introduced conscription and established the Wehrmacht; on May 25, 1935 France sent the Memorandum through which the French-Soviet Pact was seen “as a violation of the Locarno Agreement”.

<sup>5</sup> N. Dașcovici, *Interesele și drepturile României, în texte de drept internațional public*, Iași, 1936, p. 493.

<sup>6</sup> See Gheorghe Zaharia, Gheorghe Matei, Eliza Campus, *Probleme de politică externă a României 1919-1939*, București, Editura Militară, 1971, p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Istoria Balcanilor. Secolul al XX-lea*, vol. II, Iași, Institutul European, 2000, p. 195.



external political alliance network. In Yugoslavia, the fall of the Stojadinović government in early 1939 was interpreted by Italy as a weakness<sup>1</sup> and its international isolation was completed by the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Germany and of Albania by Italy. In order to develop cordial relations with Germany, the new Yugoslav government appointed at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alexander-Cincar-Markovic, who had been by then minister plenipotentiary in Berlin. With regard to Germany's intentions, the newspaper "Politika" on February 18, 1939 published a correction of the German Agency "D.N.B." to disprove the "tendentious" news about "an alleged German evasion and aggression against Hungary and Romania". In these circumstances, Romania's military attaché in Yugoslavia, Gheorghe Popescu, noted in February 1939 that "Yugoslavia's aim is to maintain a good relationship with neighbors and seems to give more importance to those with Romania"<sup>2</sup>.

In 1937, Yugoslavia, through the Prime Minister M. Stojadinović signed two treaties that changed its foreign policy orientations thus far: the Yugoslav-Bulgarian Treaty of 20 January 1937 of "lasting peace and eternal friendship" and the Italian-Yugoslav Convention of friendship and neutrality of 25 March 1937. This was contrary to the spirit of alliances that Belgrade was part of, Little Entente and the Balkan Entente. Romania and Yugoslavia's neighbors and allies were put before an accomplished fact. Under its new policy guidelines, Yugoslavia did not intervene in defense of the integrity and then of the existence of the Czechoslovak state, which led, in 1938, to the disappearance of the Little Entente.

The year 1939 brought, once with a new world war, changes in the political and military vision of decision makers from the two states. Although an attempt was made for territorial dissolution, both Yugoslavia and Romania were forced to pay a distressing tribute to revisionist trends of the totalitarian states. Territorial raptures of 1940, and then Romania's attraction in the war in East will later mark the road of the Romanian state that has defended its sovereignty and independence, and Yugoslavia, practically occupied by Nazi Germany, had to take a painful partisan war which will affect negatively the economy and the population.

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<sup>1</sup> Stefano Bianchini, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> A.M.R., fond 456, dosar nr. 321/1939, f. 263 (fund 456, file no. 321/1939, folio 263); Mihaela Bărbieru, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

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