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***Nicolae Titulescu –Romania and France - The French Documentation
Perspectives***

Abstract

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Abstract

Our research, *Nicolae Titulescu – Romania and France – the French Documentation Perspectives*, aims to be an interdisciplinary approach based on edited and unedited sources on a subject that has not been exclusively covered. The efforts towards a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the sources helped us in contouring the complex image of the subject and at the same time highlighted those questions that have been only partially answered by historic analysis so far. So, this thesis brings unity and actuality upon the subject, completes the existent research upon Nicolae Titulescu's contribution to the Romanian-French relationship and uses interdisciplinary research methods in understanding the social, political, economical and diplomatic dialogue between Paris and Bucharest from 1918 to 1939.

Key-words: international relations, diplomacy, security, foreign policy, League of Nations, interwar period.

Since the Romanian efforts in analyzing Nicolae Titulescu's career, were impressive due to the sources exploited by the historian Gheorghe Buzatu during his research at Hoover Institution for War, Peace and Revolution (Stanford University) were the personal archive of Titulescu is stored, added to the exploitation of the Romanian Archives by European Foundation Titulescu, especially by George G. Potra, I considered essential an indepth research of the French Archives in order to sustain the novelty of this initiative. Therefore we focused on the documents from the Diplomatic Archives of the French Minister of Foreign Affaires, from the National Archives of France, from the Research Section of the National Library of France and from the Library of Cultural Center Pompidou. The selection of the documents reviewed was made according to the relevance of their content for Titulescu's contribution in the Romanian-French relation (French National Archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine: *Le Petit Parisien*, 1918-1929/1930-1940 ; *Fonds de Moscou*, 1918-1929/1930-1940 ; *Fond Ministere d'Interieur*, 1918-1929/1930-1940 ; *Fond René Cassin*, 1918-1929/1930-1940 ; *Fond Paul-Boncour*, 1918-1929/1930-1940 ; French Minister of Foreign Affaires, The Diplomatic Archives, Courneuve, Paris: *Correspondance Politique et*

Commerciale, Roumanie, 1918-1929/1930-1940 and *Service Français de la Société des Nations, Relations avec les autres administrations et les mission diplomatiques, 1918-1929/1930-1940* ; National Library of France : *Bulletin perriodique de la presse roumaine* (1918-1939). We must specify that the National Library and the Library of the Cultural Center Pompidou have fulfilled all the requirements and beyond, concerning the historiography necessary in understanding the actual status of the research upon Titulescu`s career and Romanian-French relations. The archive documentation revealed a gradual attention accorded to the Romanian diplomat, this evolution being the effect of the proportional implication of Titulescu in the official relationship between France and Romania.

The structure of this paper is following a chronological pattern, having two main chapters, each with subchapters that develop specific aspects, contouring and questioning the main arguments of Titulescu`s relationship with France. The chronological interval coincides with the interwar period. The main arguments are resulting from a comprehensive approach of the documentation, press papers, historical and political interpretations and analysis, in order to surprise the complex climate of each historical event and not losing the relevance of Titulescu`s efforts in the respective matters.

The first chapter *Nicolae Titulescu`s professional evolution and the Romanian-French relations between 1918-1930* traces the Romanian diplomat career following the professional formation and his debut, the defense of the Romanian interests at the Peace Conference in Paris and the process of adapting to the European redefined power balance. Is important to mention that none of the question mentioned above were analyzed without taking into account France`s position and the role of Titulescu in the French-Romanian dialogue.

This first chapter is divided into eleven subchapters tracing Titulescu`s effort during the existence of the Romanian National Committee, the geopolitics of the postwar Europe – more specific the places of Romania and France in the new frame of security, the role of the League of Nations in shaping the dialogue between the two states, the question of the Hungarian optants, of the Romanian Oil, the postwar reparations, the Romanian-French-Russian dialogue and the Little Entente.

It was a challenging effort to catch the subtleties of the 20`s due to the fact that it corresponds to an interval when national identities were rebound, the world was living unfortunate provocations, but at the same time political European personalities were searching for new formulas of peace and security. Nicolae Titulescu is a complex political personality, whose thinking was conducted by juridical principles accompanied by an affective dimension of correctitude. Understanding the way of thinking of the great Romanian diplomat was essential in decipher the apparent contradictions of his speech related to the relations with France. The ceaseless praise he was bringing to France seemed to be in contradiction with his several declarations in which he claimed he made a series of sacrifices in order to adapt Bucharest`s external political directions to those of Paris. His activity revealed a lucid and firm diplomat, with a realistic sense of the advantages and disadvantages of the French friendship. Also, his fidelity to Paris responded to the compatibility of the regional and continental interests in security issues, between the two states. Some of the reasons that explain why he preferred Paris from all Western capitals were that France always promoted the equality between nations and also because it guided its actions in the virtue of assumed international treaties. Titulescu also added that none of the great powers showed availability in defending the small states interests, except France¹ – this also explains the support of the small eastern countries for the regional French initiatives. On the other hand, both of the states followed an antirevisionist direction in their external policy, wishing a network of treaties that facilitate an ethical and secure pattern in the international relationships. But the vulnerability of the new postwar peace was the lack of mandatory procedures of the League of Nation, which sooner than expected was categorized as an *academy of morality*, and nothing more.

All this serious challenges demanded for considerable efforts from both sides, forcing Titulescu to interact realistically with the French political class. Therefore we encounter a Romanian diplomat motivated, pro-active, and prepared with solutions and with an impressive prevision skill. Considering diplomacy by far more important than the military force, Titulescu devoted himself totally to the International Law, peace and security. We have to mention here that he managed to improve the professional knowledge acquired

¹ George G. Potra, *Nicolae Titulescu. Opera politico-diplomatică: corespondență 1921-1931*. Vol 1, Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2004, p. 54.

during his studies in Law Faculty in Paris, becoming one of the most skilful and gifted diplomats of his time.²

So, by the end of the first chapter it becomes a certainty that N. Titulescu's contribution in French-Romanian relations during the '20 was various, comprehensive and crucial, fact revealed also by the French archive documentation and the interwar press. Another certainty is that the questions analyzed in this chapter are contouring the gradual evolution of Titulescu from the outstanding student in the Parisian Faculty of Law to the brilliant and sage minister of Bucharest and later president of the League of Nations.

The second chapter *Nicolae Titulescu and the Romanian-French relations between 1930-1939* follows the second decade of the interwar period, respectively a period of intensive activity in Titulescu's career. As we've mentioned above, in the '30 the Romanian diplomat have been a constant presence in internal and international historic events. Even his actions were not bordered by the Romanian frontiers, he stayed a devoted defender of the Bucharest's security interests. By following this principle he made himself admired by a large number of European personalities of his time. Edouard Herriot sustained that *this minister of a small country makes politics at a great level*³.

This second chapter is structured in four main subchapters, each with its divisions. We argued France's efforts in conserving the continental peace by different mechanisms, the relations with Romania by its regional initiatives and the rethinking of the Romanian-Russian relation due to the Paris-Moscow dialogue. Therefore the first subchapter is divided into subjects that highlight Titulescu's position to the Paris politics in the disarmament Conference, in defining the aggression, the Pact of Four, the Balkan Entente, the Italian aggression upon Ethiopia and the military occupation of the Renan region. The second subchapter describes the French interest in the lower Danube region, respectively Romania, the third one is dedicated to the position of Titulescu in the triangle of Paris-Moscow-Bucharest and the last one describes the moment of Titulescu leaving the Romanian political scene and its implications for the external political directions. For the second decade of the

² Constantin Vlad, *Istoria diplomatiei. Secolul XX*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2014, passim.

³ Genéviève Tabouis, *20 de ani de tensiune diplomatică*, București, Editura Politică, 1965, p. 154.

interwar period we noticed a stronger bond between Titulescu and the French politicians and diplomats; we remind Aristide Briand, Pierre Flandin, Louis Barthou, Pierre Laval, Edouard Herriot and, not less important to the General Maurice Gamelain and the minister Louis Maurin.

For this chapter the documentation focused primarily on the French documentation published by the Minister of External Affairs and on the documents from the French National Archives. Also a great contribution had the Romanian documentation analyzed and published by the European Foundation Titulescu and by the Romanian historian Gheorghe Buzatu. The bibliography was completed by the references from the interwar press, speeches and modern analysis.

As far as the historic speech is concerned we ascertained the differences between the Romanian and the French sources. If the Romanian studies, in their large majority, can be described as having a romantic approach, the French ones follow a more realistic style. Nevertheless the Romanian studies have evolved starting with the '90, approaching multidisciplinary methods, based on strong documentation and well measured conclusions.

During our research the Romanian-French friendship revealed how in several cases the French interests did not corresponded to the Romanian needs, as the two states were heading to the end of the '30, therefore we sustain that more appropriate is to name this dialogue an *oscillating relation*, than a *friendship*.

More than that, regardless the type of collaboration between the two states, we ascertained the need of getting over the interpretation of the French-Romanian relations with the traditional perception of Latin fraternity. Neither the *colonial treatment* assumption made by some historians is valid because economically, France did not become one of the main partners of Romania in the interwar period. As far as the ideological influence is concerned, Traian Sandu explained that even if France managed to propagate an *adapted to Bucharest Jacobinism*⁴ we must not forget that was peculiar to a German monarchy. So, behind the official speeches stands the real face of the Romanian-French intentions, dictated,

⁴ Traian Sandu, *Le système de sécurité français en Europe centre-orientale, l'exemple roumain (1919 à 1933)*, L'Harmattan, coll. *Aujourd'hui l'Europe*, 1999, p. 13.

in their large majority by the postwar realities and the crucial need to conserve a fragile peace.

Even if Titulescu was generous in compliments for France or French personalities, he managed to keep an equilibrium between amiability and realism – he did not yield the Romanian interests for the admiration of France. Although we encounter a large number of studies with a Romantic approach upon Titulescu's dialogue with French personalities, we must not forget that such a speech not only that is not scientific, but it affects Titulescu's image in historiography.

Therefore, during this second chapter we'll observe that the historiography present the French-Romanian relations either as romantic, positive, either as a reciprocal deception. We must take into account the political and cultural differences in order to understand this duality. During the '30 France started to lose the power of influence in Romania and by the end of this decade many Romanian political voices started to plead for the *real Romanian identity* (that should have been, doesn't matter how, but less Francophile). As the extremist political tendencies were growing, so were the fractures between the two states. Therefore it becomes easy to understand why in Romania, *the small sister and friend of France*⁵, where in the past the best recommendation you could have had, was to be French⁶, has emerged a strong separation between the Francophile social classes and the political class that was decided to stop the series of intellectual passion for Paris. By the end of the interwar period Romania will become only a problematic link between Little Entente, Paris and Moscow. From Catherine Durandine⁷ we kept in mind that the destiny of the two countries separated for a while, only afterwards Romania and France reconnecting. In such a complex European context we remark that Titulescu, had to manage wisely the concept of a French friendship that could serve his efforts, but of which he should definitely not abuse.

⁵ Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Les archives diplomatiques, Correspondence politique et commerciale/Z-Europe/Roumanie 1918-1940, *Corps diplomatique français, Légation, consulats, personnel diplomatique et consulaire, 1918-1929*, microfilm cote P17348. (568-1 a 4), f. 172-173.

⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 118.

⁷ Catherine Durandine, *Perspectives franco-roumaines*, *Revue historiques des armées*, no.244, 2006, passim.

In the last part of this second chapter we ascertained that in the same way interests dictated the Paris-Bucharest dialogue, by the moment of Titulescu's removal from the head of the Minister of External Affairs, France's reaction was defined by its interest in encountering another Romanian political figure with a Francophile speech to replace him. It wouldn't be objective if we didn't mention the large admiration of the French political class for Titulescu by the year 1936, but for France's immediate pragmatic strategy was necessary to promote a decreased role of Titulescu in the French-Romanian relations. Titulescu's removal from the Romanian political scene, behind being a great surprise, was also a wished break for the Western capitals from the pressure the Romanian minister was putting in exchange for the conciliatory policy of Paris and London. The superficial immediate reactions of Paris to Titulescu's removal was explained by the general perception among the French political class that him missing from the Romanian political scene was only provisory. Only the time and the pro-German political tendencies growing in Bucharest will wake up the real significance of this event in Paris.

All in all, analyzing the statistic repartition of the treaties signed by Romania in the interwar period we ascertained a high percentage of treaties with Poland, followed, surprisingly, by Germany, while France had a medium percentage. Although we might be tempted to assume that France had a lighter relationship with Bucharest, than Germany, the repartition of the treaties along the interwar period revealed in fact a constant dialogue between Romania, France and the small central European states, while the interest in getting closer to Germany intensified on the last years of the '30. We can conclude that Romanian-French dialogue was a stable one, enforced by the common interests both of the states had with Poland and Little Entente. We must also understand that the protection of a great power was not always a guaranty for Romania's regional security needs and interests, therefore Titulescu made significant efforts in enforcing the bonds between the small states of the Little Entente, Poland and Turkey. The interstate system planed by the Romanian minister was meant to neutralize the revisionist tendencies and to strengthen the economical commune interests. All in all, Titulescu was promoting the continental *web* of engagements in defending the peace.

As we showed in this second chapter it becomes a certainty that N. Titulescu was a visionary of his times: due to his force in defending the peace with the instruments of the International Law, due to his argumentation for according an equal treatment to small countries, due to the concept of *spiritualizing the frontiers* and due to his efforts in bringing the European states into strong cultural, social and economical engagements. We have also concluded that his efforts will have been more welcomed in Europe after the Second World War, when the first steps in pan-European collaboration were been made.

Our conclusions end where we started, with the certainty that N. Titulescu was a tireless defender of the Romanian interests and European peace and security, while Paris was one of the most active European capitals in sustaining small central-European countries in their efforts of conserving the postwar territorial *statu-quo*. Nevertheless, we add the conclusion that the traditional French-Romanian friendship covered in the Romantic image of the Romanian Great Union was by the end of the interwar interval a far off memory, the skid of the events pushing away the external policies of the two states. This point of the French-Romanian relations in the late 30`s was hard digestible by the Francophile social classes, but strongly desired by the political class. In such a divided Romania, Titulescu considered that his decisions will be faire judged only by posterity and he was, once again, right.

Therefore, we have managed, during this research to assemble the involvement of the Romanian diplomat in the Romanian-French dialogue, observing the subtleties of the geostrategic settlements during the interwar period that involved the Little Entente, Great Britain, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Germany and Italy. The novelty of this thesis consists in the diversity of sources of documentation, in the global using of quantitative and qualitative methods of research and in the unique approach of Nicolae Titulescu`s contribution to the French-Romanian relation. Although at a first sight reanalyzing Titulescu`s activity might seem repetitive, the complexity of his career and the effervescence of the interval 1920-1940 revealed by the French archive documentation offered the keys of an unique research. All in all this paper completes the actual historiography, offering a comprehensive understanding of a wide spectrum of diplomatic documents, interwar journals and modern analysis.