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Between Expectations and Hesitations: Romanian-American Relations, 1938-1940

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**Between Expectations and Hesitations:
Romanian-American Relations, 1938-1940**

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Emma Porfireanu

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha

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Abstract

Romanian-American relations between 1938 and 1940 evolved at an oscillating path and developed asymmetrically according to the pattern of a big power-small power relationship. This period presents particularly interesting features due to international trends and the evolution of Romanian internal situation.

The United States did not consider the East Central European region (where Romania was situated) to have a specific importance for its national interest. Therefore, the foreign policy decision-makers of the State Department did not design a strategy toward East Central Europe in the interwar period. Moreover, this region had little to offer to the United States strategically, economically, and politically.

Neither Romania nor the United States had important political and economic interests in the other. Their material and political resources were different. Especially Romania confronted serious economic problems which impaired her abilities to develop sound trade relations with and to pay her debt to the United States in the interwar period.

The rapid advance of Germany in East Central Europe compelled Romania to ask the United States for assistance in armaments and raw materials. This initiative in Romania's arms' imports constituted a new and original departure from the previous decade. Romanian officials requested credits and loans from American private banks and manufacturers but they did not succeed in their quest due to Romania's poor payment abilities.

The American journalists and diplomats active in the Balkans informed accurately and regularly the State Department about the aggressive economic policy of the Third

Reich and anticipated Romania's weak chances to resist to Germany's drive to the East. They also identified that country as crucial in the German "drang nach Osten" due to her natural resources such as oil and grains. Unfortunately, Romania suffered during the entire interwar period from a poor public image which presented her to the American public as an exotic, politically and ethnically troubled Balkans kingdom.

The United States did not have any notable strategic, military, or economic interest in Romania at the time of Germany's march in the Balkans. Despite the warnings of American diplomats and journalists, the State Department could not connect the developments in this area with the fate of the United States and did not design an active policy to prevent its falling into Germany's sphere of influence.

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My gratitude goes to Dr. Robert Mathis without whose financial help my research travels to Romania and Washington, D.C., could have never been possible.

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Introduction

The history of Romanian-American relations has always followed an uneven path. Although some historians on both sides of the ocean have tried to demonstrate the existence of a long durable friendship between Romania and the United States, all evidence indicates that their relationship developed asymmetrically according to the typical pattern of relations between a great power and a small one throughout the entire interwar and post World War II period.

Romanian-American relations began in 1859 when Henry Romertze arrived in Galati as the first American consul to both Romanian principalities. Up to 1881, when Romania was recognized by the Great Powers as independent from the moribund Turkish Empire, the United States had hesitated in opening a diplomatic legation in Bucharest. Only in 1881, the United States and Romania began their “ordinary relations between equal political and commercial partners, as equal states.”¹ Their relationship continued to develop in the twentieth century and intensified and expanded somewhat during the 1920s and 1930s. The two years on the eve of World War II present some interesting features due to the increased interest of American State Department and the American media toward Romania.

One such feature is the American government’s response from 1938 to 1940 to the internal situation in Romania, especially the establishment of King Carol II’s personal authoritarian regime and the intensification of anti-Semitic measures. At that time,

¹ Ion Stanciu and Paul Cernovodeanu, Distant Lands: The Genesis and Evolution of Romanian-American Relations (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1985), p. 214.

Romania tried to survive German attempts to monopolize its oil and grains exports as well as to undermine the country's internal stability by manipulating the Iron Guard, an autochthonous extreme right-wing organization.

On the other hand, Americans and their elected representatives became increasingly isolationists during the early to mid-1930s. Congress, out of the desire to avoid involving America in another European war, voted the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1937, and 1939. The genesis of these acts, according to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, dated back to the 1934 "hearings of the Nye Committee, established by the Senate to investigate the manufacture and sale of arms and munitions."² President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his foreign policy advisors occasionally tried to convince the Congress of the desirability of renouncing strict neutrality and allowing the United States to involve itself more in the European events. Also, some officials of the Department of State anticipated the increasing importance of East Central and Eastern Europe in keeping the peace.

During the 1920s, Romania had oriented its economic and foreign policies toward Western Europe and its Eastern European neighbors. Despite being the second largest state in area and population in East Central Europe, it did not aspire to act as a great power in the interwar period. Romania's foreign policy was based on two regional alliances, the Little Entente and the Balkans Entente, as well as on collective security through the League of Nations. After the March 15, 1939, Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, the Romanian government's view of the national interest required an

² Cordell Hull, The Memoirs, Volume 1 (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1948), p. 398.

economic, and later a political, shift toward Germany. Armand Calinescu, Romania's Prime Minister, described the economic agreement with Germany of March 22, 1939, as having been dictated by Romania's desire to retain its borders.³ Even so, not until July 1940, Romania did completely renounce its western orientation and turn to Germany for military and political assistance. On the eve of World War II, Romania because of its rich oil resources came to be perceived by the American media and some American diplomats as the most important country in Germany's drive to European domination and world power. The American Minister in Bucharest, Franklin Gunther Mott, perceptively and promptly informed the State Department about Romania's gradual international isolation and her expected orientation towards Germany.

Despite these warnings and Romania's desperate requests to the Western powers for armament, the United States maintained a prudent distance from Romania's problems so long as American citizens or their interests were not harmed. American officials watched carefully the evolution of events in East Central Europe but took no concrete diplomatic or economic action to prevent Romania from slipping into Germany's orbit. The American national interest did not at this time call for any intervention in Europe, especially in the eastern part. This thesis will attempt to explain why American officials, despite warnings and alarm signals from the East European Division of the State Department and the Bucharest Legation, did not chose to meet Romania's requests for assistance during the late 1930s.

³ Armand Calinescu, Insemnari politice (Political Notes) (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1992), p. 235.

To date, little has been written or published about the history of Romanian-American relations. The period between 1938 and 1940 has not attracted historians' interest, and no book specifically addresses the relationship between Romania and the United States in the late 1930s, especially due to the evolution of Romanian political life during King Carol's dictatorship. The Romanian historiography during the communist period did not care to deal with issues such as the international implications of King Carol II's dictatorship or the Soviet-Romanian relations.

The principal primary sources for this thesis are the unpublished dispatches of the American Minister in Bucharest, Franklin Gunther Mott, from the National Archives, Washington, D.C., the Record Group 84, containing general records of the American Legation in Bucharest between 1938 and 1940, and the published documents in the collection Foreign Relations of the United States.

Secondary sources include articles from contemporary magazines and newspapers- Life, Time, The New Republic, Current History, and The New York Times, contemporary books about Europe in the late 1930s, works on King Carol II of Romania and his authoritarian regime, especially by foreign correspondents stationed in Bucharest on the eve of World War II, monographs and collection of articles on both American and Romanian foreign policy in the twentieth century, memoirs and diaries of political leaders and diplomats-Cordell Hull, Grigore Gafencu, Armand Calinescu, and King Carol II.

This thesis, without pretending to exhaust all sources, will examine economic, diplomatic, and political aspects of the relations between the United States and Romania as well as some specific issues discussed in the American press between 1938-1940.

Further research would have to consider other important issues of the relationship between the two countries, such as ethnicity--the role of Romanian-Americans in developing the relations--and cultural exchanges.

Chapter 1--Romanian-American Relations, 1918-1938

Romanian-American relations developed at a rapid pace between 1918 and 1938 comparing to the preceding decades. In 1918, the Romanian government acknowledged the contributions of the United States in achieving Allied victory and for a short time opened a legation in Washington. The first Romanian envoy was Dr. Constantin Angelescu whose mission was to promote Romania's national cause in the United States.¹ In the 1920s, Romania's image abroad suffered from the bad publicity given especially to Prince Carol and his morganatic marriage with the commoner Zizi Lambrino in 1918 as well as his letter of renunciation to the throne at the end of 1925. The press worldwide avidly exploited Carol's affairs. As one author, Konrad Bercovici noted, "the royal household of Romania became the smallpox of the world's newspaperdom."² No matter how harsh these words may seem, they accurately express the fact that the most sordid details of the Romanian monarchy were front-page news in the 1920s.

The relations between Romania and the United States in the second and third decade of the twentieth century were dominated by important issues such as the Romanian war debt, the uncertain status of Bessarabia, discrimination against Romanian Jews, and imbalances in Romania's foreign trade. These problems hindered the improvement of

¹ For more information concerning the mission of Dr. Angelescu in the United States, see Valeriu Dobrinescu, "Cu privire la Misiunea Nationala Romana in Statele Unite ale Americii" (Concerning the Romanian National Legation in the United States) in Profesorul C. Cihodaru la a 75-a aniversare (Professor C. Cihodaru at the 75th Birthday) (Iasi: Universitatea "Al. I. Cuza," 1983), pp. 180-194.

² Konrad Bercovici, That Royal Lover (New York: Brewer & Warren, 1931), p. 10.

U.S.-Romanian relations and helped persuade to State Department officials and American private businessmen to proceed cautiously in all dealings with Romania.

War Debts

Romania's war debts to the United States--\$36.1 million--were fifth in size among those of the six successor to Austria-Hungary states who had borrowed from America during or immediately after World War I.³ The borrowers from the United States except Finland defaulted on their debt after the Hoover Moratorium.⁴ Finland was able to pay its debts because of its favorable balance of payments in dollars.⁵ In the years following the Paris Peace Conference, Romania made several attempts to establish reasonable means of payment of its American debt. One effort to reschedule the debt occurred in December 1925. Nicolae Titulescu, chief of the Romanian delegation to Washington, at that time Romanian Minister in London, conducted the negotiations that led to a convention between Romania and the United States, signed on December 4, 1925. The final Romanian debt as defined by the agreement had amounted to \$ 44,590,000, but interest had raised it to \$ 122,506,260.⁶

³ Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Yugoslavia had borrowed more than Romania.

⁴ President Herbert Hoover proposed in 1932 a moratorium on intergovernmental debts and reparations. The Moratorium was mainly designed to shore up Germany's banking structure but lost much of its effect due to France's late response and proved insufficient to stop the liquidation of assets after the beginning of the Great Depression.

⁵ Harold G. Moulton, Leo Pasvolsky, World War Debt Settlements (New York, 1926), pp. 79-80.

⁶ Valeriu Dobrinescu, Romania si Statele Unite ale Americii (Romania and the United States of America) (Iasi: Editura Universitatii "Al. I. Cuza," 1989), p. IX.

In 1929, the Romanian Government and the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey agreed on the size of the American company's claim for destruction of property of its affiliate, the Romano-Americana company in 1916.⁷ The Romanian Ministry of Finance evaluated the destruction of company's property at \$ 2,099,900, an amount accepted by the Romano-Americana. On August 24, 1929, the American company received \$ 89,245,15.9 dollars, representing interest payments up to June 1929. Two days later, the initial sum was completed by Romanian government bonds in L50 and \$100 denominations in a total value of \$ 2,099,900 redeemable in 1965.⁸

Bessarabian problem

Despite the efforts of the Romanian government, the Bessarabian question remained unresolved throughout the interwar period. On August 10, 1920, the American Secretary of State, Bainbridge Colby, declared that the United States would not recognize any dismemberment of the Russian Empire unless it was first approved by a representative Russian government.⁹ The situation did not improve in the following years despite the efforts of Romanian representatives to Washington, Gheorghe Bibescu and especially Charles Davilla, to obtain a definite stand on the part of the U.S. government.

⁷ Due to an agreement with the Western powers, its allies, Romania destroyed its oil refineries before the Germans entered the oil-rich area in the fall of 1916.

⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929, vol. III (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930), pp. 757-758. Hereafter cited FRUS.

⁹ Ibid., 1920, vol. III, p. 427, 430.

In the context of Disarmament Conference of Geneva and the failure of Russian-Romanian negotiations in Riga,¹⁰ the Romanian Minister to the U.S., Charles Davilla, questioned Department of State officials about the American attitude toward Bessarabia. The Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Wallace Murray, noted that Davilla coupled the success of the Disarmament Conference on the solving of the Bessarabian question. Davilla thought that the recognition of Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia would make the Soviets reconsider their stubborn position and seek a solution to the problem. Moreover, the Romanian Minister cited as precedent the American recognition of the possession of Vilna by Poland, despite the territorial disputes that still existed between Poland and Lithuania.¹¹ Davilla even spoke with American Undersecretary of State, William Castle, about the U.S. attitude in the event of Russian aggression toward Bessarabia but he obtained no commitment to an American intervention. William Castle wrote in his memorandum, "I did not propose to commit myself as to probable American action in case of a very hypothetical and improbable attack on the part of Russia."¹²

Wallace Murray suggested as a compromise solution the inclusion of the Bessarabian quota in the Romanian immigration quota¹³ because "such a procedure" would constitute "ipso facto a recognition of that territory as Rumanian soil."¹⁴

¹⁰ For the failure of the Romanian-Soviet negotiations at Riga see Walter M. Bacon, Behind Closed Doors: Secret Papers on the Failure of Romanian-Soviet Negotiations, 1931-1932 (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1979).

¹¹ FRUS, 1932, vol. II, pp. 503-508.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ According to the U.S. immigration regulations, Romania was among the countries which were allotted an immigration quota.

¹⁴ FRUS, 1932, vol. II, pp. 503-508.

Moreover, he suggested that the State Department authorize the American delegates to Geneva “to express approval of the Rumanian contention that Soviet Russia in the non-aggression pact ... should agree to refrain from any acts of aggression beyond the Dniester River (present boundary between Bessarabia and Soviet Russia).”¹⁵

American officials took no concrete action in 1932 or 1933, although following the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in November 1932, they began to consider recognizing the Soviet Union, a step which would have made even more difficult any U.S. recognition of Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia. Following Murray’s advice, Cordell Hull, the new U.S. Secretary of State, favored the inclusion of Bessarabia within the Romanian immigration quota as a compromise solution. Paul Quinlan argued that Hull “told the President that this would have the effect of according American recognition to Rumanian sovereignty over Bessarabia.”¹⁶ But the United States never recognized “de jure” the union of Bessarabia with Romania.

Commercial Relations

The United States was the only country with whom Romania registered an unfavorable balance of trade the entire interwar period. In 1924, the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce of the Department of Commerce published a brochure entitled Rumania: An Economic Handbook in which it described the past and the prospects of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Paul Quinlan, Clash over Romania: British and American Policies toward Romania, 1938-1947 (Los Angeles: American Romanian Academy for Arts and Sciences, 1977), p. 23.

Romanian-American commercial relations. According to this book, in 1921, American exports to Romania, composed primarily of agricultural machinery and iron pipes, rose to \$ 5,037,989. But exports from Romania to the U.S., consisting mostly of mustard seed, walnuts, hog bristles, and skins, amounted only to \$ 238,346.¹⁷ The brochure concluded optimistically that:

The establishment in the United States of a branch of the largest Rumanian commercial bank, the activities of the American-Rumanian Chamber of Commerce at New York, the strengthening of diplomatic and consular representation in the United States, the establishment of direct steamship service between New York and Constantza, and the eventual payment of Rumania's obligations to the American Government--all should have some influence upon Romanian exports to this country.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the optimism of the U.S. Department of Commerce was far from being justified because the value of American exports to Romania continued to be larger than that of American imports of Romanian products.

In the second half of the 1920s, Romania began to import electrical appliances, radios, and automobiles from the United States. In 1926, the first radios of American manufacture penetrated Romania together with 489 American automobiles manufactured by Ford, Chevrolet, Buick, and Dodge. Actually, in that year Romania became the country in South Eastern Europe with largest number of automobiles in circulation, 16,700. In the 1930s, Romania continued to import automobiles and parts, electrical

¹⁷Department of Commerce, Rumania: An Economic Handbook (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), p. 146, 157.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

machinery, and agricultural machinery from the United States. Moreover, in 1936, General Motors opened a store for selling parts, radios, and refrigerators in Bucharest.¹⁹

The Romanian-American trade seemed to improve at the end of the 1920s. Through the new Romanian-American commercial treaty signed in December 1929, Romania received most-favored-nation treatment in customs matters.²⁰ Unfortunately, the economic depression of 1929-1933 led to a diminution of American capital market and a reduction of the U.S. investments in the states of East Central Europe. As Ion Stanciu revealed, the commercial trade was limited because of payment policy differences that existed between the two countries. The United States preferred that all exchange be in hard currency. However, Romania favored trade between the countries be valued as trade credits, and such credits be settled without the use of hard currency. The Romanian position was based on a 1932 policy that the state had a monopoly on hard currency commercial trade.²¹

In 1935, the Romanian customs figures for 1934, cited in a telegram of the American Minister to Bucharest, Alvin Owsley, to the Secretary of State Hull, showed that American exports to Romania amounted to \$ 5,440,000 (544,000,000 lei) in contrast to Romanian exports to the United States which amounted to \$ 160,000 (16,000,000 lei). Therefore, the Romanian Ministry of Industry and Commerce suspended “authorizations for the importation of American merchandise pending the conclusion of an arrangement

¹⁹ Ion Stanciu, “Relatii comerciale romano-americe in perioada interbelica” (Romanian-American Relations in the Interwar Period) *Revista de Istorie* (Historical Journal) I (1981): 114, 125.

²⁰ Dobrinescu, *Romania and the United States*, p. XI.

²¹ Stanciu, p. 123.

safe-guarding the interests of the two parties.”²² This decision was not as radical as it seemed, but it worried the American government.²³

Valeriu Dobrinescu pointed out that no development occurred in the following three years to improve trade relations between Romania and the United States. The above-mentioned author cited a dispatch from the American Charge d’ Affairs in Romania, Frederick Hibbard, in which he complained of “the diminishing volume of our export trade to Rumania caused by the artificial barriers of clearing agreements, exchange restrictions and import quotas.” The Romanian reply, coming from Victor Badulescu, the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, attributed the situation to “the inability of the Rumanian government to secure dollars.”²⁴

The main concern of American businessmen, as expressed through the American legation in Bucharest, was the alleged discrimination against their interests in favor of those of European powers, particularly France. An illustration of this concern was the case of Consolidated Aircraft Co. of Buffalo, New York. In 1933, the Romanian government intended to purchase airplane equipment and called for bids for certain types and quality of airplanes. Consolidated Aircraft was the only American company to make a bid to the Romanian government in competition with Polish and French manufacturers. Radu Irimescu, the Air Minister, considered the American bid to be the most appropriate and recommended to the Council of Ministers the purchase of twenty American training

²² FRUS, 1935, p. 256.

²³ For details, see Dobrinescu, p. LXVI.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. LXVII.

aircraft.²⁵ The Romanian Prime Minister at that time, I.Gh. Duca, who had to sign the order because the Air Minister could not personally authorize the transaction, postponed the approval of the contract. The American Minister in Bucharest, Alvin Owsley, considered the delay to be a discriminatory action against American manufacturers. “It was perfectly apparent to my mind,” wrote the American Minister in Bucharest, “that the discrimination was certainly there. The way was completely clear for the purchase of the military airplanes of American manufacture and the deal was ready to be consumed, and for some unknown reason the Air Ministry was prevented from making the purchase.”²⁶ Owsley even speculated about the possible source of the “outside” influence controlling the Rumanian ministers which he thought it was exclusively French.²⁷ In his telegram of February 27, 1934, the American Minister expanded his allegations by stating that “extremely strong pressure was brought to bear by the French against the purchase of what they termed ‘foreign planes,’ that is, airplanes manufactured by a foreign country, and presumably, the influence was most forcibly centered against the U.S.”²⁸ There was no concrete proof to support Owsley allegations in this case. Moreover, eventually Consolidated Aircraft Co. did get the contract and began delivering the planes in March 1934.

Another area of confrontation between the American business interest and Romanian instructions was motion pictures. The sound film equipment in Romanian

²⁵ National Archives, Washington, U.S., 871.248.Consolidated Aircraft Co./5. Hereafter cited N.A., 871.248.C.A./.

²⁶ N.A., 871.248.C.A./1.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ N.A., 871.248.C.A./5.

theaters was mostly American. In 1930, out of the thirty-three local theaters in which sound equipment was installed, twenty-two used American equipment manufactured at Western Electric, Moviephone, Biophone, and Pacent.²⁹ (Of the others, six were German, two were French, two were Austrian, and one was Hungarian). This situation made Romania a good market for American talking pictures. But the alleged discrimination against American business interests arose. The most vocal protests came from the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), known also as the Hays Office after its first president, Will Hays. Created in 1922 by the big Hollywood studios, MPPDA handled all international distribution problems, among other responsibilities. The organization worked closely with the Department of Commerce to sanction any country whose policies endangered the American motion picture industry's interests.³⁰ Romania was no exception.

In 1934, the Romanian Ministry of Interior issued instructions concerning the dubbing of motion pictures in Romania. Thereupon, MPPDA asked the American Legation in Bucharest "to take action calculated to improve conditions" for American films in Romania.³¹ Synchronization in Romanian language appeared as an expensive and sterile venture to the American movie-makers. In a letter of Frederick Herron, Foreign

²⁹ N.A., 871.4061. Motion Pictures/3. Hereafter cited N.A., 871.4061.MP/.

³⁰ For details about overseas operations of the MPPDA, see Ian Jarvie, Hollywood's Overseas Campaign: The North Atlantic Movie Trade, 1920-1950 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Jarvie noted, "At the Department of Commerce, the Motion Picture Division, which had been created as a section of Specialties Division in 1926 and elevated to division status in July 1929, was merged back into Specialties in July 1933 for purposes of economy. In 1936, Herron lobbied for its restoration as a separate division, a move that was made the following year." (p. 340).

³¹ N.A., 871.4061.MP/5.

Manager at MPPDA and brother-in-law of Will Hays, Romania's decision was considered "a very good example of how ... small countries were trying to shake our industry down. It was commercially impossible for any company to dub a picture just for the Romanian market."³² This action was eventually abandoned partly due to external pressure and unproductive costs for local distributors.

In 1936, the Romanian government issued a decree prohibiting the use of subtitles and superimposed titles in any other language than Romanian on foreign films released in Romania. Harold Smith, European Representative of the Hays Organization, immediately protested from his office in Paris. He considered this action to be direct discrimination against the American motion picture industry "because if the Rumanian Government forced us to take off our films the superimposed titles in Hungarian and German but at the same time permitted Hungarian and German films to be shown it would force our films out of the market."³³ This controversy actually addressed the Transylvanian market for American movies because a large part of the population in that region spoke either Hungarian or German.

Leland Harrison, the American Minister at Bucharest, did not believe Romania was discriminating against U.S. films because its regulations applied to all films shown in Romania. He also found out that the provision was made "at the request of the interested distributors in Rumania: Behr and Follender, local distributors for Warner Bros.; Zaharovici, manager of the organization distributing Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films;

³² N.A., 871.4061.MP/6.

³³ N.A., 871.4061.MP/12.

Kazazis, distributor of R.K.O. pictures; and Sitter, local distributor for Paramount.”³⁴ In the end, the dubbing of American motion pictures proved to be beneficial for the U.S. distributors. Eliminating the practice of showing American films in Transylvania with subtitles in Hungarian and German brought savings for local distributors because the cost of importing extra prints was eliminated and thereby widened the market for American movies in this region.

The Jewish “Question”

Almost from their beginning, Romanian-American relations were dominated by the minorities problem. Romania’s treatment of Jews was questioned by the Great Powers since the 1878 Peace Congress of Berlin. The European powers recognized Romanian sovereignty only after obliging the Romanian government to eliminate article 77 from the 1866 Constitution that stipulated that only Christians could receive Romanian citizenship. According to one historian, G. M. Razi, during the Congress, “Bayard Taylor, the American minister to Germany, actively lobbied several members of the Congress for ‘the enforcement of religious liberty in Rumania, Bulgaria, and East Roumelia,’ noting that this was the chief interest which the Government and the people of the United States had in the treaty.”³⁵

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ G.M. Razi, “Reflections on the First Sixty Years,” in The United States and Romania: American-Romanian Relations in the Twentieth Century, ed. by Paul Quinlan (Woodland Hills, California: American Romanian Academy for Arts and Sciences, 1988), p. 20.

After 1878, the Romanian government modified indeed the constitution to allow non-Christians to achieve citizenship but introduced qualifying provisions, such as a ten years' residency requirement, or the fact that only Romanian citizens could acquire land. The American reaction to these limitations came on October 30, 1879. According to G.M. Razi, when it learned about these constitutional amendments, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations urged Secretary of State Evarts not to recognize Romania as independent.³⁶ Even though the protest was given consideration by the State Department, the recognition of Romania by France, Germany, and Great Britain determined the United States to open the first American legation at Bucharest under Eugene Schuyler. His successor was Benjamin Peixotto, son of a Jewish doctor and president of the Supreme Lodge of B'nai B'rith who was appointed by President Grant to keep the U.S. informed about the status of Jews in Romania.³⁷

In order to understand the complicated Jewish problem of Romania, one needs to look at the history of Jewish emigration to this country. Most of the Jewish immigrants in the 1700s came from the Hapsburg Empire, but starting with 1830s large numbers of Polish and Russian Jews came to Romania after fleeing from Russian pogroms. They settled mostly in Moldova, and soon became the majority of inhabitants in cities like Falticeni, Dorohoi, Botosani, and Iasi. After 1918, when Romania was united with its long lost territories, Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina, the minorities' question became more acute. From a small, insignificant country in East Central Europe, Romania

³⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 18.

had become the second largest state in area and population of this region, with a large number of Hungarian, German, Jewish, and Ukrainian minorities.³⁸

The American press and American Jewish organizations very actively campaigned against Romania's treatment of minorities. As a consequence, Romania's image in the United States was negative. Moreover, American officials were uninformed about the similarly oppressive condition under which Romanians had existed in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. Among Romanians, the United States was not well known either. During World War I, thanks primarily to the American Red Cross aid, and the friendly attitude of Charles Vopicka, American Minister in Bucharest, America came to be associated with generosity and humanity, among others.

The relationship between the United States and Romania soured during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919-1920. The Romanian delegation, led by Prime Minister I.I.C. Bratianu, encountered Allied disapproval of Romania's treatment of national and religious minorities. On May 28, 1919, a decree was issued to naturalize Romanian Jews by endowing every resident Jew with Romanian citizenship if he or she had been born in Romania and was citizen of no other country. But that was not enough for the Allies. Poland, Romania, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia, after 1927), Czechoslovakia, and Greece were obliged to sign a Minorities Treaty, targeted mainly to give equal status to Jews. The Romanian Prime Minister considered this treaty to be a

³⁸ Before the war (1912), only eight percent of the Romanian population was foreign. The census of 1930 indicated that 71.9 percent were Romanians, 7.2 percent Hungarians, 4.1 percent Germans, 4 percent Jewish, and 3.2 percent Ukrainian. Keith Hitchins, Rumania, 1866-1947 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 290.

surrender of Romanian sovereignty and initially refused to sign it. As historian Ephraim Natanson commented, Bratianu did not sign either the peace treaty with Austria or the Minorities' Treaty until the latter was modified:

A new formulation was intended to present the treaty as an expression of the Romanian people's independent will: "Whereas Rumania desires of her own will to give full guarantees and justice." Also, to present the treaty as the result of cooperation between the powers and Romania, it was stipulated that the parties "have, after examining together, agreed to conclude the present treaty." ... Those articles dealing specifically with the Jews were deleted and the only article remaining to safe-guard Jewish rights was article seven.³⁹

Article seven stated that Romania was to recognize as its citizens all Jews inhabiting any Romanian territory. The American officials did not directly address Romania's refusal to sign the treaty, but they regarded Bratianu as stubborn and difficult to deal with.

In interwar Romania, the Jewish community hardly formed a united, homogenous community. Of the total four percent of Romanians who were Jews, historian Ezra Mendelsohn identified different heterogenous groups. The Jewish community in the Old Kingdom was small and Western-oriented, but the one in Moldova encompassed larger numbers which had an Eastern orientation. The Jews living in the newly-acquired provinces, Bukovina and Bessarabia, were of Eastern type, but had different historical experiences. The first lived under Austrian rule and developed a germanized elite unlike those in Bessarabia who were oppressed under the Czarist government and did not have an elite. Finally, the Jews in Transylvania and Banat suffered Hungarian influences and

³⁹ Ephraim Natanson, "Romanian Governments and the Legal Status of Jews Between the Two World Wars," Romanian Jewish Studies I (Spring 1987): 55.

were oriented toward the West. In Crisana and Maramures, most Jewish population came from Galicia and belonged to the Eastern-type Jewry.⁴⁰

Irina Livezeanu suggested plausible reasons for Romanian anti-Semitism. She argued that Jews were relatively more urban and educated than the Romanian population and constituted an economic and professional elite. Also, “the image of Jews was further implicated in and affected by the endless interwar debates about the national essence.” Because the Jews were “the minority most defended by Western governments and international institutions, and the most urban and overrepresented minority on Romanian university rolls,” being anti-Semitic meant being anti-Western and distinctly Romanian.⁴¹ In the interwar period, Romanian culture was beset by the search for national identity which split it in two main intellectual groups, the Europeanists and the traditionalists. The latter wanted Romania to develop through its own native population and resources, without copying any Western cultures. In this context, the Jews came to be perceived as dangerous for the ethnic purity of the Romanian people and a disturbance of its natural inclinations.⁴²

The American preoccupation with the Jewish problem in Romania resulted in negative articles in newspapers, organized Jewish lobbying of Congress on behalf of their Romanian co-religionists, and delegations to Romania to investigate the status of minorities. In 1925 and 1927, the American Committee on the Rights of Religious

⁴⁰ Ezra Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe Between the Two Wars (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1983), p. 173.

⁴¹ Irina Livezeanu, Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 13.

⁴² For the dispute between the two groups, see Hitchins, pp. 292-334.

Minorities sent two commissions to Romania “to investigate the condition of the racial and religious minorities embraced within greater Roumania.”⁴³ The 1925 delegation concentrated its attention on the Transylvanian minorities and discovered that the situation of Jews was acceptable but still needed some improvement.

The second commission of 1927 extended its research to minorities (particularly, Jews and Baptists) in the Old Kingdom, Maramures, and Banat, as well as in the newly acquired provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina.⁴⁴ Its report, entitled Roumania: Ten Years After, was published in 1929 and contained the conclusions of the commission and its suggestions to the Romanian government. In their conclusion, the commission members stated, “There remained a wide discrepancy between the Constitution adopted by the State which was liberal in many respects, and its enforcement through the officials, particularly noticeable in the administration of the outlying districts.”⁴⁵ The commission warned in particular against discriminatory actions in the outlying provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina. It also noticed that minority franchise rights were repressed and that the school laws were not always equitable. The overall conclusion of the 1927 American delegation was that “if Roumania cared to put herself in a good position in the eyes of the rest of the world, she would permit the minorities to have the sort of schools to which they were accustomed, grant them a reasonable autonomy, and give them the full right to

⁴³ Roumania: Ten Years After (Boston: Beacon Press, 1929), p. V.

⁴⁴ The members of this commission were: Dr. Henry Atkinson of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches; Reverend R.A. McGowan of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference; Dr. John Lathrop, a Unitarian Minister of Fullerton, California; and Monsieur Jules Jezequel, the Paris representative of the Church Peace Union.” (Ibid.)

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

teach the historic languages of their respective peoples as well as the Roumanian tongue.”⁴⁶

Anti-Romanian protests continued throughout the 1920s. Queen Marie’s visit to the United States in the fall of 1926 gave an opportunity for the American Jews to express their resentment at the way their co-religionists were discriminated against by the Romanian government. For example, the first question asked of the Queen when she arrived on American soil concerned the treatment of Jews in Romanian universities. During her tour, Marie received demands from Jewish community leaders to improve the situation of Jews in her country. Dr. Stephen Wise of the New York Jewish community convened a conference on the treatment of Jews in Romania. He found Queen Marie’s answers to the press so “little reassuring, that I was reluctantly compelled to appeal to America’s spirit of fair play.”⁴⁷ Rabbi Jonah B. Wise made a request to the Queen in the Central Synagogue, New York, to ease the situation of Jews in Romania, while acknowledging the difficulties of the Romanian government in coping with minority problems after 1919. “Rumania,” said the Rabbi, “had never been too well-governed and with a weak machinery could not expect to work political miracles.”⁴⁸

The ethnic minorities’ problem poisoned American-Romanian relations throughout the interwar period. As a New York Times editorial of 1926 pointed out, “good relations between the two countries could be most easily promoted by unmistakable evidence that

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

⁴⁷ New York Times, November 25, 1926, 24.

⁴⁸ Ibid., November 20, 1926, 18.

Romania was making proper use of fruits of the allied victory...”⁴⁹ Romanian officials considered the minority question exclusively an internal issue and did not allow any foreign governments to interfere with the internal policy of the Romanian state.

Cultural Relations⁵⁰

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, cultural relations between Romania and the U.S. intensified without ever reaching the same high levels as Franco-Romanian and Italo-Romanian relations. Romanians were more inclined toward cultural contacts with their Latin “brothers” for whom they had felt a greater linguistic and spiritual affinity than with the Anglo-Saxon countries.

One way to enhance the relations between the two countries was by the exchanging of students and exposing them to the culture of the host country. The simple fact of sending 250 Romanians to study in the United States between 1923 and 1935 meant an increased Romanian interest for the New World.⁵¹ Also, groups of American students came to visit Romania and studied different topics. For example, in 1925, a

⁴⁹ Ibid., November 25, 1926, 24.

⁵⁰ For more information, see C.C. Giurescu, On Romanian-American Cultural Relations (New York: Romanian Library, 1972) and Dumitru Dorobat, “Relatii culturale romano-americanе dupa primul razboi mondial” (Romanian-American Cultural Relations after World War I), in Relatii romano-americanе in timpurile moderne (Romanian-American Cultural Relations in the Modern Times), ed. by Gheorghe Florescu (Iasi: Editura Universitatii “Al.I.Cuza,” 1993), pp. 289-312.

⁵¹ Dorobat, p. 301. Buletinul Institutului Americano-Roman (Bulletin of the American-Romanian Institute), 1935-1936, gives selective numbers of students studying in the United States: 1925-26, 39; 1928-29, 41; 1934-35, 9.

group of professors and students from New York University visited Romania to study immigration patterns.⁵²

Both Romanian and American friendship societies were created in this period. Their modest work contributed to the popularization of Romania in the United States and the United States in Romania, enhancing both populations' knowledge about each other. In 1926, the "Friends of the U.S." (Amicii S.U.A.) was created in Romania as a replica of the American "Society of Friends of Roumania" founded in 1920. Also, in 1924, some enthusiastic Romanian-Americans, guided by Basil Alexander, founded in New York the "Sons of Romania-Association of American Citizens."⁵³ These societies sponsored periodicals--Revista Romano-Americana (Romanian-American Review), Buletinul Institutului Americano-Roman (Bulletin of the American-Romanian Institute), Romanian Quarterly--in which were published valuable articles on America's culture and daily life; translations from American literature and poetry; studies of sociology, political science, and economics with a special emphasis on the evolution of Romanian immigration to the United States; and profiles of Romanian personalities who visited the New World as well as their impressions and thoughts. The newspaper America, published in Cleveland, Ohio, pursued the same kind of cultural activity by making cultural propaganda among Romanian-Americans and helping them remember their country of origin.

⁵² Dorobat, p. 310.

⁵³ For more information about the latter, see Vasile Hateganu, Romanians of New York, Part II, Romanian-American Heritage Center Information Bulletin 4 (July-August 1992): 23.

The Atlantic ocean was not an obstacle to Romanians who wanted to acknowledge the importance of and to learn the style of life in the United States. Among Romanian personalities who visited the North American continent between 1920-1938 were Constantin Brancusi with and his famous sculpture "Pasarea maiastra" (Wonderful Bird) in 1928; composer and violonist George Enescu in 1924 and 1932; historian Nicolae Iorga, in 1930; mathematician Gheorghe Titeica, in 1924; and Prince Carol of Romania (1920) and Queen Marie of Romania (1926).

In the interwar period, instead of translating French or German editions, Romanians translated directly from English American novels. Jack London, Pearl Buck, and Louis Bromfield received special attention. Not only American writers but also scientists attracted the attention of the Romanian public. As C.C. Giurescu noticed, there were writings on the life and activity of Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the incandescent bulb and of the phonograph.⁵⁴ Also, in 1932, Eugen Marius Cioc edited a book about the life, industrial methods, and economic ideas of Henry Ford. Two years later, Ford's autobiography, My Life and Work (Viata si opera mea) was published in Bucharest.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The authors on the monographs about Thomas Edison's life and activity were C. Gh. Bradateanu in 1932 and G.G. Longinescu in 1936.

⁵⁵ Giurescu, p. 7.

Diplomatic relations

Between 1920-1933, the United States opted for a policy of strict neutrality which affected its relations with the entire European continent. The Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 was a peculiarity in this context. Drafted by Aristide Briand, eminent diplomat and French Foreign Minister, and Frank Kellogg, U.S. Secretary of State, the treaty attempted to outlaw war and to encourage arbitration and diplomacy as the only legal means of solving disputes between countries. Romania, who signed the Pact on September 4, 1928, was among the states that fully supported it in accordance with its pledge for world peace and security.⁵⁶ Also, in March 1929, Romania and the United States signed a treaty of arbitration and conciliation.

Romania was in the forefront of East European states which advocated the containment of the revisionist states of Germany, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and the Soviet Union, and some collective security solution developed through the League of Nations. Nicolae Titulescu, the famous Romanian statesman who was twice in succession elected president of the League of Nations General Assembly, appreciated the American support "in keeping peace alive on the European continent."⁵⁷ He considered the United States to be a model of democracy that European nations should emulate. Referring to President F.D. Roosevelt's speech at the 150th anniversary of American Constitution, Titulescu

⁵⁶ Romania signed also the Litvinoff Protocol of 1929 which represented the practical application of the Pact in Eastern Europe.

⁵⁷ Nicolae Titulescu, Documente diplomatice (Diplomatic Documents) (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1967), pp. 386-387. For more information about his activity, see Walter Bacon, Nicolae Titulescu and Romanian Foreign Policy, 1933-1934, (Ph. D. diss., Denver University, 1975).

praised the democratic principles of the U.S. and the President's indictment of dictatorship and rearmament. He further asserted that , "Romania could be saved from all dangers by following ... a democratic internal government and a defense policy of its frontiers through mutual assistance pacts with its neighbors."⁵⁸ American diplomacy valued Romania's efforts to keep peace on the European continent through the consolidation of the two regional alliance systems, the Little Entente and the Balkans Entente. As Paul Quinlan observed, "... the U.S. government closely watched Romania's political developments. With the growth of Fascism, the State Department became worried about the future of Romania. American ministers in Bucharest sympathized with the non-Fascists, but carefully refrained from getting involved in domestic affairs."⁵⁹

The gradual disintegration of the international situation in the 1930s worried the American diplomats and President Roosevelt. The latter was caught between Congress, which wanted to keep America out of European "quarrels," and his own belief that a German domination of Europe would ultimately threaten the U.S. security and world influence. The Western European powers and American officials became more interested in the situation in East Central Europe in which many perceived Romania's importance of oil and grains to Germany's potential for making war. They were concerned about that country's gradually falling under German influence but were not sufficiently alarmed to take any action to stop it. Valeriu Dobrinescu opined that, "the economic depression of 1929, the international conferences--of world economy of definition of aggression and

⁵⁸ Titulescu, Politica externa a Romaniei (Foreign Policy of Romania) (Bucuresti: Editura Enciclopedica, 1994), p. 201.

⁵⁹ Quinlan, p. 23.

aggressor, and of disarmament,--and, most of all, the coming to power of Nazi Party in Germany and its revisionist policy of the Paris peace settlements, were factors that modified radically the State Department's view of European affairs.⁶⁰

Romania appreciated the increasing American verbal involvement in European affairs. Referring to the declaration by Cordell Hull to the press on July 16, 1937, Victor Antonescu, Romanian Foreign Minister, confessed to the American Minister in Romania, Leland Harrison, that his government was pleased by "the desire for international peace and cooperation" expressed by the United States. Antonescu also emphasized that, "the Rumanian government had not ceased to conform its policy to the principles which Mr. Hull had wished to reaffirm with such force and clarity."⁶¹ This declaration by the Romanian Foreign Minister, coming one year after the dismissal of Nicolae Titulescu, expressed Romania's commitment to peace and cooperation with the West.

At the beginning of 1938, Romania's position in Eastern Europe was increasingly threatened by the German march to the East. In these circumstances, Romanian officials turned for help to the Western powers and the United States. The American Minister in Bucharest, Franklin Gunther Mott, warned the Department of State about the danger of losing Romania to Germany. Ultimately, the fall of France, London and Washington's disinterest along with other international developments led to Romania's coming into the German sphere of influence in 1940.

⁶⁰ Dobrinescu, p. IX.

⁶¹ FRUS, 1937, pp. 567-569.

Chapter 2 -- Diplomatic Aspects of the Relations Between Romania and the United States

When discussing the relations between the United States and Romania, one must keep in mind not only that the two countries are separated by half of the European continent and the Atlantic Ocean, but also the asymmetrical relationship between a great and a small power. Although both countries shared a general desire for peace in Europe, their methods of achieving this goal were distinct and dictated by their national interests.

In the late 1930s, the United States was isolationist and kept a cautious distance from the turmoil in Eastern Europe. A dichotomy in American foreign policy making was evident when President Roosevelt and his advisors disagreed with a majority in Congress and certain isolationist circles. The Roosevelt Administration tried to raise the American people's awareness of the Nazi danger for the United States' security and to gather popular support for a stronger foreign policy. As Richard Snyder noted, "The record was clear that Roosevelt himself regarded totalitarianism as evil, war as evil, and the former as destined to lead to the latter in a holocaust from which the United States would not be able to remain aloof without immeasurable sacrifice of its principles and its interests."¹ The President needed more than personal convictions to stimulate an active American involvement in European affairs.

¹ Richard Snyder, and Edward Furniss, American Foreign Policy: Formulation, Principles, and Programs (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1954), p. 40. For a more recent opinion on Franklin D. Roosevelt's perception of the events on Europe, see Gaddis Smith, American Diplomacy during the Second World War, 1941-1945 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

American isolationists aimed to prevent entanglement of the United States in Europe's squabbles. Through the years, they transformed isolationism from an attitude to a psychological barrier designed to protect American citizens from war. Many Americans believed United States participation in World War I had been a mistake promoted by businessmen interested only in profits.² The most emphatic statements of American isolationism were the three Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1937, and 1939 which declared Congress's will to keep America out of a future European war.³

On the other hand, Romania was diplomatically dependent upon the protection of the Western powers--France, her traditional ally, and Great Britain. In the interwar period, Romanian diplomats did not consider the United States as a potential guarantor of the territorial integrity of the Romanian state. The main objective of Romanian foreign policy in the late 1930s was the maintenance of the territorial "status quo" within the context of Romania's deepening international isolation and the rapid modifications in the international balance of power in favor of Hitler's revisionist policy. Romanian diplomacy tried to ward off the increasing dangers of aggression on the part of Nazi Germany and Horthyist Hungary by granting more and more substantial economic concessions to the Third Reich.

² An eloquent example of this opinion among Americans were the investigations of the Nye Committee.

³ William Langer, and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolationism: The World Crisis of 1937-1940 and American Foreign Policy, vol. I (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 204.

Eastern Europe was still a remote region, little known in the United States before World War I, despite the big number of immigrants which came from this area at the end of 1800s and the beginning of the twentieth century. American intervention in the first world conflagration, President Wilson's Fourteen Points, and the Paris Peace Conference brought Eastern Europe under scrutiny. American officials regarded the political turmoil in this region as a danger to the stability of the entire continent. During the 19th century, the Balkans were named "Europe's powder keg" because of the potential of their nationalist conflicts eventually involving all the great powers. For this reason, before the American entrance in the war, President Wilson and his team of experts inclined toward retaining the Austro-Hungarian monarchy as a guarantee of the European balance of power. Although the small Allied Eastern European countries triumphed in Paris, the former Allies continued to fear the consequences of conflict in this region.

Reflective of Western opinion about Eastern Europe was the chapter dedicated to it in the prestigious publication Survey of International Affairs, edited by Arnold Toynbee. Eastern Europe was there perceived as a region prone to national conflict due to its "national groupings [who] had not undergone the historical development and discipline which in the west had produced the nationalist creed itself."⁴ Social conflicts between classes also characterized this region and were attributed to "the absence or weakness of an indigenous middle class, ... the retarding of commercial development for over ten

⁴ Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946: The World in March 1939, ed. by Arnold Toynbee (London: Oxford Press, 1952), pp. 212-213.

centuries by invasion, warfare, and the deadening rule of the Turkish Empire....”⁵ Finally, Martin Wright emphasized that the survival of the new East European states depended on the Great Powers who used them either as a barrier to German expansion eastward or as “a cordon sanitaire or buffer zone protecting Central and Western Europe against the Bolshevik danger from the east.”⁶

Romania had become the second largest country and occupied an important strategic place in East Central Europe after 1919.⁷ The Treaties of Saint-Germain and Trianon sanctioned the union of Bukovina and Transylvania with the rest of the Old Kingdom. On November 18, 1918, the Council of the Fatherland (Sfatul Tarii) of Bessarabia voted unanimously the return of this region to Romania. Romanian leaders led a vigorous campaign to justify the historical rights of Romania to these provinces. Nevertheless, the Western European powers and the United States thought of the Eastern European kingdom as an “inflated,” opportunistic country which took advantage of its participation in the war to aggrandize itself territorially. For example, a 1940 article in The New Republic alleged that “Rumania entered the last war for what there was in it and grabbed territory right and left while the grabbing was good.... The bribes she received in the war settlement have been a sore spot in Europe ever since.”⁸ The assertion about “the bribes” referred to Transylvania, which Hungary had continuously claimed since 1918, and

⁵ Ibid., p. 220.

⁶ Ibid., p. 235.

⁷ In 1919, Romania had a population of 16,250,000 which grew to 19,933,802 in 1939. The territorial gains added 156,000 square kilometers--in 1920, Romania encompassed 296,000 square kilometers. Hitchins, p. 290.

⁸ The New Republic, July 8, 1940, p. 45.

Bessarabia, whose union with Romania was never recognized by the Soviet Union. Because the United States did not ratify any of the World War I treaties, it did not feel obliged to contribute to the maintaining of the status quo in Eastern Europe.

In the late 1930s, the situation changed when the rapid advance of Germany in East Central Europe alarmed American officials. One of the interesting facts about American isolationism was that the President and the Department of State were constantly and generally correctly informed about the situation in Romania and other Eastern European countries situated in the way of Nazi expansion. As historians William Langer and Everett Gleason noted, "Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Hull were ... promptly and fully informed. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that they were better placed than other statesmen to see all aspects of the situation and, if they deemed it desirable, to exercise great influence."⁹ The American Ministers to France, Belgium, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and Romania, as well as Pierrepont Moffat, Chief of the European Division in the State Department, and his team did not tire of informing the President and the Secretary of State of the worrying developments in Eastern Europe and Romania. In light of reports received by the State Department, the period between 1938-1940 was particularly important for understanding the attitude of the United States toward Romania. Valeriu Dobrinescu pointed out that "the American Ministers accredited in the European capitals noticed the narrowing of survival possibilities of the countries of East-Central Europe and

⁹ Langer and Gleason, p. 76.

the Balkans because of the conciliatory policy of the great European powers towards Germany and the other revisionist states.”¹⁰

The annexation of Austria (Anschluss) and the Munich Agreement were particularly damaging for the independence of the countries in Eastern Europe. Paul Quinlan concluded that “with the Anschluss, French hegemony over South Eastern Europe ended. The old balance of power was replaced by an unstable equilibrium between three power groups: France-Great Britain, Germany-Italy, and Soviet Russia.”¹¹ Romania occupied a precarious position between Germany and Russia. French historian Henri Prost commented on Romania’s precarious strategic position which placed her between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, “two colossuses whose military power grew day by day and whose appetites would change the 1919 European status quo.”¹² The Anschluss brought Germany on to the Danube and put her in the position to control the commercial traffic on part of the river. This situation, in turn, threatened the economic independence of the riverane countries, among them Romania whose rich oil and grain resources attracted the Third Reich’s economic strategists. American officials acknowledged Germany’s appetite for the resources of Romania. In August 1938, G. S. Messerschmidt, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, estimated that Hitler’s domination

¹⁰ Valeriu Dobrinescu, Emigratia romana in lumea anglo-saxona, 1939-1945 (Romanian Immigration in the Anglo-Saxon World) (Iasi: Institutul European, 1993), p. 119.

¹¹ Quinlan, p. 32.

¹² Henri Prost, Destin de la Roumanie, 1918-1954 (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1954), p. 112.

of Austria and Czechoslovakia was intended to clear the way to the Romanian oil without which Germany could not pursue war.¹³

Tension over Czechoslovakia's fate brought into light Romania's situation. Romania, together with Yugoslavia, was allied with Czechoslovakia through the Little Entente. The three countries expended a lot of effort in consolidating this regional alliance after 1933 which was directed against Hungarian revisionism. The Little Entente did not become, in spite of the efforts and hopes of its participants, a powerful instrument of protection for the three countries.¹⁴ As Marvin Wright acknowledged, "Eastern European politics were haunted by the longing for collective independence in international affairs, and by the fancy of political self-sufficiency.... The illusion was always pursued, and never attained, that there might be built up in Eastern Europe an autonomous third force, a neutral bloc that would itself have the defensive weight of a Great Power."¹⁵

In 1938, after the Munich crisis, Romania was ready to fulfill her duties in the Little Entente. In the gamble of defending Czechoslovakia, Romania played an important part not only because of her membership in the regional alliance but also because of the way the alliance system was established in the East Central Europe. Czechoslovak security rested on two treaties of 1935, the Franco-Czechoslovak and the Soviet-

¹³ FRUS, 1938, vol. I, p. 68.

¹⁴ For more information about the activities and failures of the Little Entente, see Eliza Campus, Mica Intelegere (Little Entente) (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica, 1968); Robert Machray, The Struggle for the Danube and the Little Entente, 1929-1938 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938).

¹⁵ Survey of International Affairs, p. 235.

Czechoslovak, which implied a coordinated military intervention by France and the Soviet Union. Romania and Poland were asked in 1938 and again, at the beginning of 1939, by George Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, if they would agree to let the Soviet troops and planes cross their national territories to help Czechoslovakia.¹⁶ The American Minister to France, William Bullitt, announced to the Department of State that Poland “would declare war immediately on the Soviet Union if the Soviet Union should attempt to send troops across Polish territory to support Czechoslovakia.”¹⁷ Concomitantly, the Polish Ambassador to France, Juliusz Lukasiewicz, declared that “he was certain that the Rumanian government would declare war simultaneously on the Soviet Union in accordance with the Polish-Rumanian alliance.”¹⁸

There was no question of an unfriendly attitude toward Czechoslovakia on the part of Romania. For example, Romanian military historian Ioan Talpes used documents from the Archives of the Romanian Ministry of National Defense to prove that the planes bought by Czechoslovakia from the Soviet Union flew over Romania by governmental agreement.¹⁹ An explanation for Romania’s reluctance to allow the Soviet troops and planes to cross its territory lay in the U.S.S.R.’s obstinate refusal to recognize formally the

¹⁶ Ioan Talpes, Diplomatie si aparare, 1933-1939 (Diplomacy and Defense) (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1988), p. 220. For more information, see Documents Diplomatiques Francais, 1932-1939, Vol. 10 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1970).

¹⁷ FRUS, 1938, vol. I, p. 507.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* See also Juliusz Lukasiewicz, Diplomat in Paris, 1936-1939: Papers and Memoirs of Juliusz Lukasiewicz, Ambassador of Poland (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

¹⁹ “From June 15 until July 27, 1938, forty bombers flew from Romania to Czechoslovakia.” Talpes, p. 221-222.

union of Bessarabia with Romania. Another reason why Romania did not want to be involved in a formal commitment toward the Soviet Union was fear of Germany. As Grigore Gafencu remarked in his conversation with William Bullitt in April 1939, “Rumania would be most embarrassed if either England or France should make pacts with the Soviet Union guaranteeing Rumania against attacks as such parts might be in themselves sufficient to provoke Hitler to attack Rumania.”²⁰ Western politicians found it difficult to understand the fear of Romania towards its Soviet neighbor. Moreover, they regarded the Soviet Union as a possible ally against the German “Drang nach Osten” and did not want to endanger a future alliance with the Soviet Union for the sake of Romania.²¹

Romanian officials became worried about the dissolving of their allies. After Munich, the Romanian Military Headquarters commented on France’s and Great Britain’s appeasement diplomacy at Munich and concluded that the recent events proved the weakness of Romania’s alliance with the two Western European powers. Moreover, the analysts of the Romanian Military Headquarters warned against the impossibility of the Little Entente to be effective in stopping the Nazi march to the East.²² King Carol II of Romania and his advising team reached at Romania’s neighbors and allies to find help, but

²⁰ FRUS, 1939, vol. I, pp. 90-92.

²¹ In October 1939, Franklin Gunther Mott wrote in one of his telegrams to the State Department that he heard both the Turkish and the British Ministers to Romania “advise a member of the Rumanian Government to put up a stiff resistance to any Russian demands which may be forthcoming. When asked what kind of assistance would be extended by their respective countries they replied evasively.” (N.A., 871.24/181)

²² Talpes, p. 252.

they were disappointed. Poland had a non-aggression pact with Germany. Czechoslovakia was half dead. Yugoslavia had a treaty of friendship and neutrality with Italy and had important economic and commercial relations with Germany. The only hope remained the invitations to visit England, already postponed twice, in January and May 1938. In November 1938, King Carol II's diplomatic journey to England, France, and Germany was the cry for help from a Romania suffocated by the Reich's economic pressures. Before the visit, Romanian officials had received assurances of sympathy from London and Paris; they went personally to assess the degree of interest of France and Great Britain in protecting Romania. No documents attest to the attitude of American officials toward this royal visit but it is known that Franklin Gunther Mott, the American Minister in Romania, informed Washington about the efforts of Sir Reginald Hoare, the British Minister, to raise England's interest in Romania: "If Great Britain is ever serious to attempt to stem the German Drang nach Osten, a strong Romania in which Great Britain has a vital interest would be a serious stumbling block in the path of Mr. Hitler."²³

The results of the royal visit gave little comfort to the Romanian side. Although the king was well-received in London and Paris, his requests for economic assistance did not generate direct help from the Western powers. As A.L. Easterman, Foreign Correspondent for Daily Herald commented, despite England's sympathetic signs, "in 1939, Romania was still, in British eyes, a distant and comparatively unimportant Balkan

²³ FRUS, 1939, vol. I, p. 386. For the Great Britain's strategy on Romania, see David Funderbunk, Politica Marii Britanii fata the Romania, 1938-1940: Studiu asupra strategiei economice si politice (Great Britain's Policy toward Romania: A Study in Economic and Political Strategy) (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1983).

state.”²⁴ Carol did not have much luck at Berlin either. Hitler did not want to give Romania any guarantees against a possible Hungarian or Soviet attack. In turn, the Reich’s leader threatened Carol with more pressure if his economic demands were not satisfied.²⁵

No documents clearly indicate the position of the United States toward the British involvement in Romania. Probably, the State Department officials felt part of the assistance process by supporting the English efforts to strengthen the relations with Romania. Paul Quinlan suggested that “the United States ... encouraged Britain not to abandon Romania. [Ambassador Joseph] Kennedy said to Halifax that America would be ‘more readily moved’ to support Britain if she aided Romania, than if she did nothing. If, having abandoned Romania, England became involved in a conflict with Germany in defending Greece or Turkey, America might not come to her aid.”²⁶ Also, in September 1938, William Culbertson, the former American Minister to Bucharest in the 1920s, visited Romania to promote economic and financial relations between the two countries. Upon his return, he made a broadcast on national radio (September 28, 1938) about the results of his Eastern European trip. Culbertson underlined the dangerous consequences of the Munich Agreement for the countries in this region. The former American Minister remarked Romania’s desire to preserve its independence and national frontiers: “In

²⁴ A.L. Easterman, King Carol, Hitler, and Lupescu (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1942), p. 168.

²⁵ For an account of King Carol’s visit at Berlin and Hitler’s demands, see Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945. Series D (1937-1945), Volume 6 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1957).

²⁶ Quinlan, p. 43.

Romania, the King, with whom I talked at some length, was determined to maintain the independence of his country from outside control and to advance its moral and material development.”²⁷

The year 1939 brought more challenges and anxieties to Romania and drew the attention of the State Department to this country. One event which deeply affected Romania was the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. Czechoslovakia had been Romania’s most reliable armament contractor with almost 70 per cent of Romania’s arms contracts from 1919 to 1939.²⁸ According to historians Gh. Zaharia and I. Calafeteanu, Czechoslovakia honored most of its contracts before the German occupation. In August 1939, the Romanian infantry had 300,000 “ZB” rifles; 20,177 “ZB” sub-machine guns; 3500 “ZB” machine-guns. The artillery received 248 100-mm “Skoda” shell-machines and 180 150-mm “Skoda” shell-machines, all from the 1937 production.²⁹

Also in March 1939 occurred the famous episode of the intervention at the British Foreign Office by Viorel V. Tilea, Romanian Minister in London.³⁰ While in Bucharest, a German delegation, led by Dr. Helmuth Wohlthat, was pressuring the Romanian government to accept Germany’s economic demands. On March 17, V.V. Tilea had

²⁷ Dobrinescu, Romania si Statele Unite ale Americii, pp. LXVIII and LXX.

²⁸ Talpes, p. 268.

²⁹ Gheorghe Zaharia and Ion Calafeteanu, Politica de aparare nationala a Romaniei in contextul european interbelic, 1919-1939 (The National Defense Policy of Romania in the Interwar Period, 1919-1939) (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1981), p. 319.

³⁰ For details, see Funderbunk, pp. 95-103.

declared to the British Foreign Minister, Lord Halifax, that the Third Reich had given to Romania an economic ultimatum. Tilea stopped at the American Embassy on his way to the Foreign Office in London.³¹ Therefore, the United States officials were fully and immediately informed of the alleged ultimatum. Tilea's intervention alarmed other American diplomatic officers who tried to get as many details as they could about the truth of his assertions. William Bullitt, American Ambassador to France, and Edwin Wilson, Counselor of Embassy, discussed with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Bonnet, and the Romanian Ambassador in Paris, former Prime Minister Gheorghe Tatarescu, what would happen in case Germany had really delivered an ultimatum. They concluded that Germany's economic demands on Romania had taken "the form of a virtual ultimatum."³² Bullitt related that the Romanian Ambassador in Paris confessed to him that

what Germany had demanded was all the grain of Rumania for four years and all her oil production, the turning over to Germany of plants connected with the oil production which were now in the hands of foreigners, some of them Americans, and the right to Germany to develop and exploit new oil fields in Rumania without the Rumanian Government having any control over the German development and exploitation of those.³³

The American Ambassador asked Gheorghe Tatarescu what Romania thought about Soviet assistance. From his reply, Bullitt concluded that neither Romania nor Poland "would dare to make a deal with the Soviet Union for fear of too greatly offending

³¹ Dobrinescu, Romanian Immigration, p. 120.

³² FRUS, 1939, I, p. 79.

³³ Ibid.

Germany; but both countries in case of necessity would welcome the Soviet Union's aid."³⁴

As an immediate consequence of Tilea's intervention, the British government made inquiries of the governments of Romania, Greece, Poland, Yugoslavia, France, the Soviet Union, and Turkey about their positions regarding cooperation in case of a future attack on Romania or other Eastern European countries. The Department of State received a detailed telegram from Joseph Kennedy, the American Ambassador in England, summarizing these countries' answers to the British inquiry. Greece stated it would consult with Turkey and Yugoslavia whether or not to help Romania in case of a German attack. Turkey declared that, although it did not receive any communication from Bucharest, would fulfill its Balkans Entente obligations. Yugoslavia replied that it would opt for neutrality in case of a conflict because of Italy's involvement with Germany. The Polish Foreign Minister, Joseph Beck, doubted that Germany had sent such an ultimatum to Romania. The Soviet Union proposed a conference among the six most interested countries, namely Great Britain, France, Poland, Greece, Turkey, Romania, and the U.S.S.R. to discuss the position of all participants.³⁵ France declared itself prepared to participate in a joint defensive action and underlined the importance of Western help toward Romania. Finally, Romania expressed its reluctance to participate eventually in any mutual assistance pact due to the fear of an immediate German attack. Although the

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ See also the memorandum of the Chief of the Division of European Affairs, Pierrepont Moffat, March 21, 1939, FRUS, 1939, I, p. 73.

Romanian government denied the existence of a German ultimatum, most historians agreed that Tilea's intervention was instrumental in Great Britain's decision to give unilateral guarantees to Poland, and later, Romania and Greece on April 13, 1939. Ambassador Joseph Kennedy noted that "the Rumanian demarche had at least served the useful purpose of galvanizing the Western democratic powers into immediate examination of the new situation and the dangers it presented."³⁶

The international isolation of Romania forced its officials to sign the economic agreement with Germany on March 22, 1939.³⁷ King Carol's decision to grant economic concessions to Hitler must be connected to the international developments in East-Central Europe at the time--the disappearance of Czechoslovakia as an independent country, the building Polish corridor crisis, and the formation of the "independent" Slovak state--as well as with his desire to keep the Reich away from Romania's borders through economic concessions. Nevertheless, the King realized, as Easterman noted, that the treaty "meant a victory for Hitler; it was the first Roumanian slide-slip into the grip of Nazi Germany. He realized something more--that the ratification, with the sterile results of the British Guarantee, had weakened his position abroad and diminished his authority in his country. His obviously pro-British--and pro-French--policy had suffered a severe setback."³⁸ In this period, Romanian diplomacy had one goal, to maintain friendly relations with

³⁶ FRUS, I, 1939, p. 92.

³⁷ For details on the Romanian-German economic agreement of 1939 and its background, see A. Niri, Istoricul unui tratat inrobitor (The History of an Enslaving Treaty) (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica, 1965) and Andreas Hillgruber, Relatiile romano-germane, 1938-1944 (Romanian-German Relations, 1938-1944) (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1994).

³⁸ Easterman, p. 181.

Germany through economic concessions. For example, in 1939, over half of Romania's trade was with Germany, the new source of most Romanian war material.³⁹ The country was in an awkward position, as synthesized by Grigore Gafencu: "Guaranteed by London and armed by Berlin, Rumania was in a situation in which anything might happen."⁴⁰

In this tense international atmosphere, President Roosevelt sent his peace telegram to Hitler on April 14, 1939.⁴¹ His gesture could be attributed to the increasing American anxiety about the fate of Europe, particularly its East Central part.⁴² The President called on Mussolini and Hitler to agree on a ten or twenty-five year non-aggression agreement and to express openly their future intentions. Roosevelt also asked the two dictators not to aggress thirty-one states--one of which was Romania. Hitler reacted vigorously on April 17 by asking all states mentioned by President Roosevelt if any of them feared Germany. Hitler questioned Romania if she provoked the U.S. intervention, and if she felt threatened by Germany.⁴³ To such direct questions, Romania could answer only in the negative. At the same time, to demonstrate their pro-Western attitude, Armand Calinescu,

³⁹ Quinlan, p. 60. See also Hillgruber, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Grigore Gafencu, Last Days of Europe: A Diplomatic Journey in 1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 129.

⁴¹ For the entire content of the telegram, see Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 455-458.

⁴² As notable coincidences with this unprecedented event, one must notice the visit of the American Ambassador to London, Kennedy, to the British Prime-Minister, Neville Chamberlain. Also, in the same of the speech, Romanian Foreign Minister, Grigore Gafencu, started its European diplomatic tour.

⁴³ Dobrinescu, Romanian Immigration, p. 123.

Romania's Prime-Minister, and King Carol II received visits from American officials to Bucharest and asked them if the United States would sell them arms on credit.⁴⁴

Another important event for Romanian diplomacy was the visit of Foreign Minister, Grigore Gafencu, to London, Paris, and Berlin where he met with the American diplomats William Bullitt, American Ambassador in Paris, Joseph Kennedy, American Ambassador in London, and Joseph Davies, American Ambassador in Brussels.⁴⁵ In his account of the conversations with Gafencu, Bullitt said that the Romanian Foreign Minister asked him if he thought Rumania could obtain airplanes, anti-aircraft guns, and anti-tank guns in the United States and instructed Gh. Tatarescu, Romanian Minister in Paris, to give Bullitt a list of things Romania needed from the United States. Gafencu also explored possibilities of increasing the trade between Romania and the United States but he did not get a clear answer from the American Ambassador.⁴⁶ Given the reluctance of France and Britain to help Romania, Bullitt warned the State Department that that country would make "friendship acts, particularly economic, towards Hitler."⁴⁷ Valeriu Dobrinescu opined that, in the summer of 1939, the U.S. Department of State had become very preoccupied with the international situation of Romania. As result, on June 6, Radu

⁴⁴ King Carol II, Intre datorii si pasiune: Insemnari zilnice (Between Duties and Passion: Daily Notes) (Bucuresti: Editura Silex, 1995), p. 105.

⁴⁵ Grigore Gafencu, Last Days of Europe: A Diplomatic Journey in 1939.

⁴⁶ FRUS, 1939, I, p. 176.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 175.

Irimescu, the Romanian Minister in Washington, was called to the White House and received Roosevelt's promise that he would ask the king of England to help Romania.⁴⁸

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, 1939, surprised and troubled the United States and the Western European powers, especially because it ended the latter's efforts to bring the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (U.S.S.R.) into an alliance against Germany. Paul Quinlan concluded that this "pact not only wrecked Britain's attempts to extend her alliance system, but also made World War II almost inevitable. At the same time, it had grave consequences on Romania."⁴⁹ American and European diplomacy did not know about the existence of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by which Germany expressed its disinterest in Bessarabia, but understood that the conciliation of the two powers meant a higher risk of attack for Romania.

The Washington authorities were informed promptly about the turn of the events. Joseph Davies described the Pact in his report to the White House as a "calamity" and "one of the greatest diplomatic defeats the British Empire ever sustained," and pointed out the U.S.S.R.'s importance as "a source of food and supplies to Germany."⁵⁰ Davies observed the impact of the Russian-German agreement on the Balkan states. He believed that Hitler gained time to render solid his acquisitions in East Central Europe and to

⁴⁸ Dobrinescu, Romanian Immigration, p. 125.

⁴⁹ Quinlan, p. 47.

⁵⁰ FRUS, 1939, I, p. 189.

organize the resources of the Balkans while benefiting, even for a short time, of the industrial and material resources of the Soviet Union.”⁵¹

Franklin Gunther Mott told the State Department of the anxiety of Romanian officials about the Pact and Carol’s pessimism:

The king was not surprised by Germany’s non-aggression pact with Russia nor does he feel that it alters the situation particularly. Hitler ... will make the most of it internally and of the commercial pact but that his principal motive therein for the present was to eliminate one potential enemy. He observed that Western leaders must have been credulous indeed if they really thought that they could succeed in getting Russia to fight for them.⁵²

Valeriu Dobrinescu asserted that the two events, the failure of the Russian-English-French negotiations and the Russian-German Pact, radically changed the military and political situation of Romania and narrowed her room for maneuver. “The entire juridical basis of Romanian-Soviet relations was annulled.”⁵³ Therefore, Romania started to seriously consider Germany as a protector against a potential Soviet attack.⁵⁴

After September 1939, Romanian officials looked more toward the United States for help and material support. Franklin Gunther Mott continued to inform Washington about Romania’s situation and warned his superiors about Romania’s going over to the German side. He did not question the country’s decision to preserve its boundaries or independence in case of an individual attack from Russia or Germany, or a conjugated

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 371.

⁵³ Dobrinescu, Romania and the United States, p. LXXVI.

⁵⁴ Romanian diplomacy did not know about the secret protocols but King Carol II and his advisors feared continuously of a Soviet attack on Romania.

action of the two. On September 19, 1939, Armand Calinescu told Mott emphatically “that Great Britain and France alone and unaided were in no position to offer resistance.”⁵⁵ The Romanian Prime Minister opined that “America could play a decisive role by the wholesale furnishing of arms and munitions” because Romania was “in a strategic position to offer effective resistance if properly armed.”⁵⁶

Romania appreciated President Roosevelt’s drive for peace and his offers to mediate between Germany and the other belligerents. Therefore, Romanian diplomats kept in contact with the American Minister in Bucharest about any peace proposals coming from Washington. On October 2, 1939, Gunther informed the Secretary of State that Gafencu inquired if “a[ny] peace initiative by President Roosevelt was under contemplation.”⁵⁷ The Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs confessed his conviction that only President Roosevelt’s intervention could help the peace movement. He added that, were peace to end, “the outlook was indeed dark for Rumania, for either the Allies were victorious, in which case Rumania would have no protection against Russia, or Germany would win, in which case Rumania would forcibly become its vassal.”⁵⁸ Two days later, Constantin Argentoianu, short-term Prime Minister of Romania after the assassination of Armand Calinescu, made the same inquiry to Gunther Mott. A proposal by Franz von Papen, German Ambassador in Turkey, for a united peace movement of European neutral states prompted Gafencu and Argentoianu to inquire about the United

⁵⁵ *FRUS*, 1939, I, p. 442.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

States' opinion of the German approach. The American Minister concluded that Romanian government thought that only the United States could convince Great Britain to help the neutral European states.⁵⁹

The biggest tension in Romanian-American relations between 1938 and 1940 developed over the problem of Polish refugees. Well-known is the fact that on September 17, 1939, Romania, a neutral country, offered asylum or transit to Polish officials, civilians and troops. Gunther's telegrams expressed the fact that Romania dealt with a situation without precedent in international law, except for the refuge taken by Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, and his Court after the Italian invasion of his country. The only condition demanded by Romania from the Polish leaders was they would not conduct propaganda on Romanian territory and that they would enter as private citizens. The request seemed reasonable considering the possible danger of immediate German intervention. Both Bullitt and Gunther immediately informed the State Department about the seriousness of the German threats against Romania: "Berlin had warned Bucharest to the effect that Berlin would not countenance Bucharest's (a) permitting officials of the Polish Government to function or (b) permitting officials or Polish refugees of military age to leave Rumania."⁶⁰

While on Romanian soil, the former Polish leaders declared that the Poles would continue to fight from exile. Therefore, Romanian officials decided to intern them out of

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 501.

⁶⁰ FRUS, 1939, II, p. 689. See, also, Ambassador's Bullitt telegram from September 26, 1939.)

fear of a German attack on Romania. Immediately, France and England directly pressured Bucharest to release the former Polish leaders and indirectly brought pressure to bear from the United States. The American government did not decide to get involved until late September and kept its intervention strictly private.⁶¹ Cordell Hull advised Minister Gunther to approach the Romanian officials “in a purely personal way.”⁶² Also, the American President sent a personal message to King Carol about the United States’ intention to invite ex-President Moscicki of Poland for a visit, even though he had expressed a desire to seek asylum in Switzerland. Roosevelt suggested that Gunther should present to the Romanian sovereign with “a verbal message, ... without anything in writing or without an aide-memoire. This could be done without any publicity whatsoever.”⁶³

Unfortunately, the State Department, in replying to Mott, did not address to Germany’s reaction to Romania’s facilitating Moscicki’s visit to the United States. Franklin Gunther Mott asked the Department of State if “President Moscicki’s liberation would result in punitive action by Germany and/or Russia” and in either event whether or not it was “prepared to do at least as much as you did for Finland.”⁶⁴ His inquiry received no answer, although earlier the American Minister informed his superiors about the external and internal danger faced by Romania those days. Partly due to Gunther’s

⁶¹ Paul Quinlan believed that the President was pressured by Bullitt and Biddle, the American Ambassador to Poland, to intervene on behalf of the Polish official refugees.

⁶² Ibid., p. 693. See also Hull, pp. 686-687.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 701.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

diligent efforts, the ex-Polish President left Romania on December 25, 1939, followed by other officials. Only former Polish Prime-Minister, Josef Beck, already tired and sick, died in Romania in 1944.

Romania was worried not only about the German invasion of Poland, but also about the Soviet occupation of the Subcarpathian Ukraine on September 17th. The American Ambassador in Italy, Phillips, was quick to inform the Secretary of State that Romania would be “the first to feel the shock of the oncoming Russians.”⁶⁵ Gunther expressed the same fears from Bucharest regarding Romanian concern toward the future intentions of the Soviet Union. There was “considerable anxiety in Government circles concerning the future intentions of Russia.... Even should peace come it would hardly relieve Rumania from the potential danger of Russia in its new geographic position of advantage.”⁶⁶ Gunther also observed how, momentarily, Romanian fears shifted from Germany to the Soviet Union: “It was my belief that Russia presented a much greater danger to this part of the world than did Germany.”⁶⁷ Gunther underlined the fragility of the English guarantees granted to Romania on April 13, 1939 and pointed out the fact that Great Britain would not go to war with the Soviet Union for Romania. The British guarantee of April 1939 referred exclusively to a German aggression.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ FRUS, 1939, I, p. 502.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 499.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. The new direction in Romanian diplomatic history emphasized the lack of practical value of the British and French guarantees and that their intentions of helping Romania did not go beyond the letter of the treaties. See Viorica Moisuc, Premisele izolării politice a României (Premises of Romania's Political Isolation) (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1991).

The Department of State received more information not only from Bucharest, but also from Moscow about Romanian isolation in the event of a Soviet attack. The American Ambassador in Moscow, Lawrence Steinhardt, confirmed Gunther's fears. In a conversation there with the Italian Ambassador, he discovered that Italy would not object or intervene if the Soviets should limit their violent action to Bessarabia. Eventually, Italy would be interested in a pact with Turkey, France, and Britain, to stop a further Russian aggression in the Balkans.⁶⁹ Italy was vitally interested in the future of Albania and Greece. As long as Russia did not exhibit any particular interest in this part of the Balkans, Italian officials were willing to make no intervention on behalf of Romania.

It is fair to say that the American officials received information about the possibility of Soviet aggression against Romania, starting in the fall of 1939. In October 1939, the Department of State received from Moscow a report that the Soviet Union was inquiring of Romania's allies about their policies in case it attacked Romania. The dispatch mentioned the Turkish-Russian negotiations for a non-aggression pact which brought to light the question of Romania: "The question of Romania had also been subsequently raised by the Soviet Government with the object of obtaining assurances of Turkish neutrality not only in the event of the Soviet seizure of Bessarabia but also in the event of a Bulgarian attempt to acquire the Dobrudja."⁷⁰ Grigore Gafencu had many hopes that the Turkish-Soviet negotiations would ease Romania's way to signing a non-

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 484.

aggression pact with the U.S.S.R.⁷¹ He knew that Turkey was obliged to intervene in Romania's defense--according to the Balkan Entente--only in case of a conflict among the Balkan states. Romania kept constantly in touch with American diplomats in hope that they would persuade the Soviet Union not to attack Romania. The only official U.S. request was expressed by Ambassador Steinhardt at the beginning of 1940. He communicated to Viaceslav Molotov, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, that Washington hoped that the Soviet government "would not formulate demands incompatible with the independence and sovereignty of Rumania."⁷² In early 1940, Gafencu was ready to negotiate a solution with the Soviet Union to ease the tension between the two countries. He asked the United States, through Gunther, if it could obtain "a clarification of Russian intentions."⁷³ The State Department reaffirmed its neutral position so long as the interests of American citizens were not affected: "It would be inopportune and would serve no useful purpose for the American Embassy in Moscow to take steps along the lines suggested."⁷⁴

Isolated and scared, King Carol II turned completely to Germany in June 1940. He named Ion Gigurtu, a pro-German businessman, as Foreign Minister in June 1940, later Prime Minister. At the beginning of July, Romania withdrew from the League of

⁷¹ Grigore Gafencu wrote in his memoirs: "To clarify the Soviet Union's intentions toward us, we counted on Saracioglu's negotiations in Moscow. The Turkish Foreign Minister who negotiated an assistance pact with the Russians, could obtain, maybe, a status quo in the Balkans." Grigore Gafencu, Note politice, 1929-1939 (Political Notes, 1929-1939) (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1992), p. 342.

⁷² Dobrinescu, Romanian Immigration, p. 127.

⁷³ FRUS, 1940, I, p. 468.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Nations and renounced the British-French guarantees. A.L. Easterman justified King Carol's radical change of policy:

Both the enemies and friends of Carol saw only one way out of the critical situation which faced Rumania--to make the best of a perilous situation by accepting the fact of Hitler's triumphant mastery of the European continent and to integrate Rumania within that actuality. There seemed no other way to save Rumania, no other hope of extricating from the ruins of Western Europe some resemblance of national existence than by seeking the tolerance, if not the goodwill, of the Nazi Fuhrer.⁷⁵

The international isolation of Romania increased in the summer of 1940. The fall of France in June 1940 ended Romania's system of alliances based on France's military strength. Franklin Gunther informed the State Department about Romania's territorial losses of June 26, August 30, and September 4.⁷⁶ Starting with late May 1940, Washington was overwhelmed with messages from Moscow and Bucharest about a massive concentration of Soviet troops at the Romanian border. In a telegram dated May 29, 1940, Cordell Hull asked Walter Thurston, American Charge d'Affairs in Russia, to check information received by the State Department about "an intensive military activity along the Rumanian frontier in the Soviet Union, the very active construction of roads and rail facilities in Russian-occupied land and the removal of peasant population from the frontier districts in the Union. Romanians were fearful of a Soviet military invasion."⁷⁷ Hull encouraged Thurston to express to the Soviet authorities the American concern about

⁷⁵ Easterman, p. 206.

⁷⁶ On June 26, 1940, the Soviet Union presented Romania with an ultimatum asking for Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. On September 1940, through the Dictate of Vienna, Romania lost most of Transylvania. Finally, as result of the Craiova negotiations, Romania ceded to Bulgaria the southern part of Dobrudja.

⁷⁷ FRUS, 1940, I, p. 469.

“reports ... of the possibility of the extension of war in the Balkans.”⁷⁸ The sudden fall of France and the victorious march of the German army to the English Channel alarmed not only England but also the United States and the Soviet Union, the latter having counted on a long war between the “imperialist” powers. Therefore, the telegrams received by the State Department in the summer of 1940 indicated that the American Ambassadors to Moscow, Ankara, and Bucharest had seen the Soviet attack on Romania as a defensive measure designed to strengthen the southern and western borders of the U.S.S.R.⁷⁹

The State Department’s opinion of the Transylvanian problem, and ultimately, of the Diktat of Vienna, was shaped by the analyses and reports of the American Ministers to Bucharest and Budapest.⁸⁰ They recognized that tension between Hungary and Romania had amplified in the summer of 1940 and reported on possible negotiations between the two countries to settle the Hungarian claims to Transylvania. In July 1940, the American Military Attaché to Bucharest, Major John Ratay, concisely evaluated the internal situation and the foreign policy of Romania. He alerted the American officials in Washington to Hungary’s taking advantage of the precarious situation of Romania after the seizure of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to pressure the Romanian government to reach an

⁷⁸ Ibid. Thurston’s answer revealed a vague possibility of a Russian attack over Bessarabia, but considered the Soviet Union in a defensive position: “... Should conditions appeared propitious (as the result of general hostilities in the Balkans or otherwise) it was to be assumed that the Soviet Government would seize the opportunity to recover Bessarabia.” FRUS, 1940, I, p. 471.

⁷⁹ See FRUS, 1940, I, pp. 470-479.

⁸⁰ For more information, see Nicolae Dascalu, “Dictatul de la Viena in viziune americana” (The American Perspective on the Diktat of Vienna), in Relatii romano-americane in timpurile moderne, pp. 231-250.

agreement in the Transylvanian problem. Ratay opined that there was not much chance of a negotiable solution due to the inflexibility and offensive attitude adopted by the Hungarian delegation.⁸¹ On July 26, 1940, it became obvious that the discussions between the two countries would not resolve anything. Therefore, Hitler decided to intervene and on August 30, Germany and Italy arbitrated the conflict between Romania and Hungary.⁸² Romania lost a good part of Transylvania, but Germany guaranteed the rest of the Romanian frontiers. The State Department expressed its regret concerning Romania's desperate situation. On January 15, 1941, Cordell Hull presented to the House of Representatives a report on the international situation in which he deplored the dismemberment of Romania and its occupation by the Germans.⁸³

The foreign policy assumptions and goals of Romanian diplomacy during 1938 to 1940 were not shared by the extreme right wing parties. For example, according to Mihail Sturdza,⁸⁴ the United States had a large responsibility for abandoning the fate of Europe in the hands of the Soviet Union. By not participating in the League of Nations, the American diplomacy left the debate arena to diplomats like Nicolae Titulescu

⁸¹ In a later report, Ratay blamed Russia for forcing the issue of Romanian frontiers by acquiring Bessarabia. Once the first move to revise the borders was made, Hungary took advantage of the situation. The American attaché defended Romania's decision to cede without a fight Transylvania because otherwise she was threatened either by a German or a Soviet attack.

⁸² German historian A. Hillgruber opined that Hitler arbitrated between the two countries because he was afraid of a Soviet intervention. Hillgruber, p. 235.

⁸³ Dascalu, p. 240.

⁸⁴ Mihail Sturdza was counselor of the Romanian Legation in Washington between 1927-1930, as well as Foreign Minister of Romania during the short-term joint Antonescu-Iron Guard government (September 1940-January 1941).

(Romania) and Edvard Benes (Czechoslovakia) who were “advocates” of Russia. Sturdza blamed Titulescu for influencing the Romanian officials in their decision to stop the payment of Romania’s debts to the United States because he would not forget the cold reception he received on his 1926 American visit.⁸⁵ One must note that the Romanian right wing exercised no control on the Romanian foreign policy making and remained peripheral to any decisions until the Iron Guard-Antonescu regime was established in September 1940.

During the period 1938 to 1940, the relations between Romania and the United States developed in a context of high and growing international tension. The two countries closely followed events in Europe and worked for peace. They disagreed with the Western powers’ appeasement policy at Munich and on the German occupation of Austria, Bohemia and Moravia. Nevertheless, in spite of Romania’s demands for a more assertive involvement of the United States in the problems of East Central Europe, officials in Washington opted for a watchful and cautious attitude. Although the American Minister to Bucharest warned the State Department about the danger of losing Romania to Germany, American diplomacy reacted slowly and thus indirectly contributed to the surrender of Romania to the German sphere of influence.

⁸⁵ See Mihail Sturdza, Romania si sfirsitul Europei (Romania and the End of Europe) (Alba Iulia: Fronde, 1994), pp. 63 and 80.

Chapter 3-- Economic and Financial Relations Between Romania and the United States

Between 1938 and 1940, the economic and financial relations between Romania and the United States were dominated by issues unsolved in the previous years, such as Romania's debts and her government's tight control of all hard currencies used in foreign trade. These problems rendered the U.S. State Department and private American firms reluctant to provide Romania with armaments and credits despite their having received warnings from the American Legation in Bucharest that Germany was pressing its way into the Romanian economy by stimulating the latter's interest in a barter agreement. Also, American exports, especially of motion pictures, encountered difficulties in penetrating the Romanian market.

The economic systems of the two countries in the interwar period functioned very differently at times. The United States favored trade based on immediate payments in hard currency. On the other hand, Romania preferred clearing and barter on imports and exports because of its permanent lack of hard currency. Moreover, since 1932, the state tried to monopolize through the National Bank of Romania most of hard currency transactions resulted from foreign trade. This particular situation obliged all exporting firms, including American ones, to depend upon import authorizations and foreign currency quotas granted by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. By practicing such a policy, common in East Central and Eastern Europe at that time, the Romanian

government tried to protect its hard currency reserves and keep the national currency relatively stable. Furthermore, Romania had few exports of any interest to Americans.¹

Officials in Washington wanted to be as well informed as possible about Romania's powers of resistance to German economic pressure without taking any particular measures to offer Romania an alternative. American Minister in Bucharest, Franklin Gunther Mott, reported that the British government had established at Munich not only the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia but also acquiesced to German economic expansion in Eastern Europe and was not willing to invest enough in Romania to try to stop the German eastward expansion. He anticipated Romania's economic agreement with Germany in March 1939 when writing to the State Department in December 1938: "It would not surprise me if there were soon some sledge hammering in the German trade and barter negotiations going on with Rumania."² Gunther observed that Romania was being driven slowly but surely into Germany's sphere of influence by French and British indifference and reluctance to offer help. During King Carol's November 1938 visits to London, Paris, and Berlin, Romania's desperate demands for economic assistance received no assuring responses from London and Paris. Gunther concluded that "since the Western democracies have either been unable or unwilling to assist Romania in its gallant efforts to maintain its economic independence or prepare for future defense, they have only

¹ Sumner Welles wrote in his memoirs, "...the agricultural products upon which the economy of the Balkan nations depended so large an extent were not required by American importers." Sumner Welles, The Time for Decision (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), p. 253.

² N.A., 871.24/152.

circumstances and themselves to blame should this country come to fall into a species of economic vassalage to Germany.”³

American economic interests in Romania were limited to selected areas, such as: royalties from motion pictures, oil refining, rental for business machines and manufacturing rights to tires, cosmetics, parachutes, and oil well equipment. In 1938--4.92 percent of Romanian imports (\$ 6,500,000)--the United States was seventh among countries in value of goods exported to Romania, with automobiles and different machinery comprising the largest part. The United States ranked fifteenth with 1.31 percent of Romanian exports (\$ 2,000,000) to foreign countries. Exports to America consisted primarily of lambskin, sugar, beet pulp, hams in tins, and wood pulp.⁴ The Romanian Ministry of Economy hoped to stimulate the American demand for additional Romanian products, especially wines and plum brandy (*tuica*), by displaying them at the Romanian pavilion at the New York World's Fair of 1939.

The main American firms in Romania included Romano-Americana, a subsidiary of Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey that extracted and refined oil; Vacuum Oil Co. in refining; International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) in the operation of telephone systems and in manufacturing; International Harvester in sales of agricultural machinery; Ingersoll-Rand in steel production; and Ford with an automobile assembly plant.⁵ A survey of the U.S.

³ Ibid.

⁴ N.A., Record Group 84, Bucharest Legation, General Records, 1940, Box 1. For more information, see Ion Stanciu, “Relatiile comerciale” (Commercial Relations).

⁵ N.A., Record Group 84, Bucharest Legation, General Records, 1940, Box 1.

Department of Commerce dated May 26, 1938, estimated that the American economic investments in Romania exceeded \$ 200 million.⁶

Romanian distributors had connections with American motor companies, such as Ford and Nash. Shipments of automobiles were made through Hamburg up to 1939. Due to the instability of the European political situation after the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, shipments were then sent through the Romanian harbor of Constanta.

American investments in Romanian oil industry were assessed in August 1939 at more than \$26 million for the Romano-Americana and Vacuum Oil Co.⁷ In 1938, when the Romanian government began more restrictive regulations of the country's natural resources and dollar reserves, Romano-Americana experienced some problems. The company had 850,000 Turkish pounds blocked by the Turkish government in the clearing account of Romania with the National Bank of Turkey. Romano-Americana's manager feared that Romanian officials would not be firm enough with the Turkish government to recoup the money for fear of endangering the cooperation within the Balkan Entente. Romano-Americana had difficulties doing business with the Romanian National Bank because it was obliged, together with all companies exporting merchandise from Romania, to deposit most of hard currencies it earned into accounts at that bank. In 1938, the

⁶ FRUS, 1939, I, p. 75. Direct commercial investments in Romania rose at \$ 46 million; Romano-Americana (\$ 26 million) and ITT (\$16 million) were the main official American businesses. Also, the survey counted Romania's war debts (\$ 64 million) and the various Romanian bonds owned by American citizens (\$ 20,531,500). N.A., Record Group 84, Bucharest Legation, General Records, 1940, Box 1.

⁷ N.A., Record Group 84, Bucharest Legation, General Records, 1940, Box 1. In 1938, the executive branch of Romano-Americana moved to Brussels for administrative reasons.

American company found itself with no dollars to pay its employees or to make different payments. The cause of these problems lay in the absence of a clearing agreement between the United States and Romania. The situation was resolved by finding a loophole in the clearing convention with Great Britain whereby Romano-Americana worded its requests for hard currency so that it would appear that the funds were needed to pay debts due to England and not to Romania.⁸

The Romanian government tried to encourage American businessmen interested in understanding the situation of and developing trade with Romania. In September 1938, Romanian officials invited Dr. Thomas Watson, President of the International Chamber of Commerce and of International Business Machines Company, to discuss American business opportunities in Romania and the possible granting of U.S. credits for Romanian purchase of American munitions and arms. Franklin Gunther Mott asserted that Watson sympathized with Romania's requests and opined that because the country bought a lot from the United States, it should be helped. He was among the American businessmen who thought that the United States "made a great mistake ... in not trying to help some of these smaller countries in Southeastern Europe. ... The value in friendship and trade would bring to the United States a far greater return than ... pressing them on the debt."⁹

Since 1938, the Romanian government had expressed interest in enhancing its defense capabilities. Unfortunately it was too late to build up a Romanian defense industry and to equip the army with modern technology and arms. A report of the

⁸ N.A., 871.5151/110.

⁹ N.A., 871.24/147.

Romanian Prime Minister Armand Calinescu, dated June 1939, showed that between 1920 and February 1938 the Romanian government had spent 25 million lei for national defense in contrast to the 36 million lei spent from February 1938 to June 1939.¹⁰ The constant Romanian preoccupation with armaments was noticed even by the American Embassy in Rome. On August 21, 1937, Colonel C.H. Paine, American Military Attache in Italy, notified the Department of State that the Romanian government had purchased thirty training planes from the Italian government in exchange for crude oil.¹¹ Also, in November 1937, the Romanian government approached the Douglas and Lockheed companies to purchase aircraft valued at \$1 million. The Romanian civilian airlines, LARES, bought two Douglas DC-3 airplanes and four Lockheed 14s, both with Wright Cyclone motors, and three Lockheed Electras with Pratt-Whitney motors.¹² The following year, Romanian officials concluded a deal with an American company, U.S. Ordinance Engineers, Inc. to build a plant in Romania specializing in manufacturing aerial bombs.¹³ This company had similar contracts in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

In September 1938, on the eve of the Munich crisis, the American Minister in Bucharest started to notice that Romanian officials were more favorably disposed toward American business interests than before.¹⁴ King Carol II had decided to turn to the United States for armaments because he considered the Czechoslovak, British, and German markets unreliable due to the tense European situation. He realized that these countries,

¹⁰ Zaharia and Calafeteanu, p. 317. See also The New York Times, June 29, 1939, 12.

¹¹ N.A., 871.248/21.

¹² N.A., 871.248/22,23.

¹³ N.A., 871.24/146.

¹⁴ Ibid.

especially Czechoslovakia and Great Britain, had to meet their own armament needs because a conflict with Germany seemed probable. Carol's aimed to achieve uniformity of equipment and therefore chose the American armaments and munitions as the standard. Minister Gunther insistently asked the State Department for a positive reply that would satisfy the King and be beneficial for American business interests. The U.S. government could not directly engage arms traffic on account of the severe embargo established by the Neutrality Acts of 1935 and 1937, but it could inquire about private firms' and banks' willingness to do business and give credits to Romania. Cordell Hull advised the Romanian government to negotiate credits directly with American banks even though he had little expectation that the latter would thereby want to extend credit: "In view of the unsatisfactory manner in which that Government was servicing its bonds now held in this country, and in view of the present situation in Europe, it would seem to be unlikely that [American] banks would undertake to furnish credit to Rumania at this time."¹⁵

In January 1939, General Negri, Romanian Minister of Armament, contacted the American Commercial Attache in Bucharest, Richardson, to discuss Romania's desire to purchase anti-aircraft equipment, artillery, planes, and other armaments in the United States. The Department of State replied to the Romanian inquiry late in May 1939, stating that it could not intervene with private American armament manufacturers while offering its own information as long as no military secrets were involved. Cordell Hull replied: "The Rumanian government like other foreign governments was, of course, free to enter the American market to purchase arms. I would not ... take any initiative to arrange for

¹⁵ N.A., 871.24/147.

the sale of arms to Rumania, and ... I could not undertake to negotiate with the Rumanian government or with the government of any other foreign country.”¹⁶ The Romanian order for 200 anti-aircraft guns and 400 anti-tank guns could not be fulfilled because the American industry did not manufacture such guns; also, no 47 mm guns were in use in the United States. The 37 and 75 mm anti-aircraft guns could be ordered on the basis of 25 percent cash payment with the order and the other 75 percent on delivery which could not be expected in less than a year.¹⁷

The main difficulty in contracting for armaments encountered by the Romanian government in the United States was its lack of cash and the absence of American credit. A possible solution resided in the Romanian-British commercial treaty of May 1939. The Romanians regarded it not only as a means of strengthening the relationship with Great Britain, but also of satisfying Romania’s growing need for arms. Victor Slavescu, the Minister of Armament, intended to purchase arms in the United States with part of the five million pounds of British credit obtained through the treaty. Because Great Britain could not provide Romania with guns equal to this value, Romanians were hoping that, through the intervention of the U.S. State Department, they could utilize part of the British credit to purchase American armament.¹⁸

Gunther was aware that Germany, because it favored the barter system, would take advantage of Romania’s desire to acquire armament rapidly and without any immediate cash payments. He noted that “the dire and immediate need of Romania for

¹⁶ N.A., 871.24/168.

¹⁷ N.A., 871.24/169.

¹⁸ Ibid.

armament provided tremendous latent possibilities for Germany to apply pressure for extra liberality in the application” of the economic agreement of 1939.¹⁹

The authorized dealer for Ford in Romania, Nicolae Perry-Porutiu, a naturalized Austrian citizen from Cluj, offered to import airplanes, parts, and airplane accessories for which payments could be made in New York against credit documents. He expressed his interest in specific types of equipment including heavy military bombers, high-speed fighter planes, airplanes for medical purposes as well as light, medium, and heavy passenger planes for civilian purposes.²⁰ To date, no documents have been found to follow up on the story of Romanian requests for armaments in the United States. But the November 1939 telegrams of Gunther Mott revealed the success of another order placed in the United States by the Romanian government for 500 truck chassis and other equipment valued at \$1 million--undoubtedly needed by the Romanian army.²¹ The lack of dollar exchange obliged the Romanian government to place the bulk of its other orders with Germany and Great Britain where they could be paid through clearing. The American \$ 1 million

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ N.A., 871.248/25. At this stage of the research, no documents were found to confirm his intervention on behalf of Romanian government.

²¹ The orders were placed with Ford subsidiaries from Romania, Great Britain, the United States, and Germany. From England: 1500 ambulances and 400 trucks suitable for conversion into ambulances; from Germany: 250 Ford trucks; from the United States: 500 Ford trucks with Marmon Harrington drive (four wheels); from local stock: 250 trucks, 80 air force trucks for searchlights, 23 commissary and kitchen trucks, and six mobile service stations. (N.A., 871.24/182). A telegram of the Legation in Bucharest, dated December 11, 1939, informed the State Department that the entire order of Ford trucks from the United States was paid integrally and would be delivered by the end of the year. The Romanian officials were impressed with the promptitude of American manufacturers and placed another order of 1,000 similar trucks valued at \$ 2,500,000. The shipment of ambulances from Great Britain sunk on its way to Romania. (N.A., 871.24/191). See also New York Times, December 8, 1939, 13.

would be split between Marmon Harrington (\$ 440,000) and Ford (\$ 560,000). Marmon Harrington was to be paid cash with the order. In order to pay Ford, the first \$ 400,000 was to be immediately transferred to New York, and the local Ford subsidiary was to advance a balance of \$ 134,000. The Romanian government arranged to cover the sums by a \$ 600,000 credit opened with the Chase National Bank of New York. Its future plans included a purchase of 276 similar truck chassis and sixty tractors with trailers valued at about \$ 800,000.²² Unfortunately, the Secretary of American Legation in Bucharest, Frederick Hibbard, expressed his doubts that “in view of the threatening political situation, it was uncertain whether the Romanian government would be able to obtain delivery of any of the equipment ordered from abroad.”²³

The desire of Romanian officials to do business with American firms was demonstrated by their willingness to find reasonable means for payments. The dollar reserve held by the Romanian National Bank was very low because exports to the United States in 1938 were only \$ 2,537,000.²⁴ Frederick Hibbard considered the sacrifices made by Romania to find \$ 1 million as “an interesting index of intense desire to improve its defense as rapidly as possible and at any cost.”²⁵

The Romanian government’s efforts to contract for arms production in the United States in the fall of 1939 paralleled those of a private Romanian firm, SAREP (Societatea

²² N.A., 871.24/180.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The order placed with American firms was of \$ 1 million which represented almost half of the dollar reserves of Romania.

²⁵ N.A., 871.24/180. In 1938, Romanian officials started an intense activity for strengthening the defense capabilities of the country. For more details, see Zaharia and Calafeteanu, The National Defense, and Talpes, Diplomacy and Defense.

Romana de Representare), which was interested in marketing in Romania anti-aircraft guns of 25 to 100 mm and anti-tank guns of 47 mm.²⁶ SAREP used the American Legation in Bucharest as an intermediary to gather information about American firms willing to sell these products to Romania. Their inquiry was taken by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce which advised the firm to contact a series of American private manufacturers and to deal directly with them. Some of them, such as Bethlehem Steel, of Pennsylvania, Midvale Company, of Nicetown, Philadelphia, and the Federal Laboratories Inc., Pittsburgh expressed their reluctance to supply any kind of armament material, so the inquiries of the Romanian firm did not materialize in any concrete exports concerning these companies.

Lack of raw materials for the domestic armament industry persuaded the Romanian government also to turn to the United States for help. The requests for aluminum and copper, badly needed by the Romanian airplane industry,²⁷ were rejected by American private industries which did not want to provide raw or semi-manufactured material for the building up of competing industries in Europe. Also, aluminum was included on the Army and Navy Munitions Board list of strategic and critical materials.²⁸ Colonel MacMorland from the Army and Navy Munitions Board reported to the State Department that the Romanian Minister in Washington and former Romanian Minister of

²⁶ The U.S. Chamber of Commerce ran a check on SAREP and concluded it was joint stock company, owned by two Polish citizens, Oscar and Bernard Allerhand, with a capital of 1 million lei.

²⁷ According to one telegram, 100 tons of aluminum could help manufacture 100 planes. (N.A., 871.24/192).

²⁸ Army and Munitions Board, The Strategic and Critical Materials, March 1940.

Air, Radu Irimescu, could not pursue his government's desire to purchase 100 tons of ingot aluminum and 18 to 20 tons of electrolytic ingot copper due to the refusal of the Aluminum Co. and Anaconda Copper Co. to sell these materials. Desperate, Irimescu tried to convince MacMorland that the order would be accepted if only the government would approve it first. He even assured Cordell Hull that this aluminum would be used exclusively for Romanian needs and would not be reexported.²⁹

The reluctance of American private industry to satisfy Romania's desire to buy raw material and arms may be explained by the tense international situation in the fall of 1939. The war had already started in Europe, and the United States' government was preparing its strategic reserves in case of a future participation.³⁰ Although the Neutrality Act of 1939 abolished the arms embargo, it anticipated that the belligerent states which had greatest need for American armaments would be the main beneficiaries of "cash-and-carry" provisions. Romania, as a neutral country, could not have the same claims on American sympathies than would the nations at war with Germany.

²⁹ N.A., 871.24/190. Also, the Romanian government empowered Wachner, the head of the Romanian Ford subsidiary, to negotiate the purchase of raw rubber for the local Banloc-Goodrich Tire Factory, tires and 40,000 square yards of canvas for the manufacture of tops for trucks. He did not have any success in convincing the American manufacturers to sell him rubber. (N.A., 871.24/193). See also New York Times, April 30, 1940, 6.

³⁰ For example, on June 7, 1939, the U.S. Congress passed a legislation stating that it was the policy of Congress to provide for acquisition of stocks of "certain strategic and critical materials being deficient or insufficiently developed to supply the military, industrial, and naval needs of the country for common defense ... in times of national emergency." Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 63.

The desire for armament expressed constantly by the Romanian officials in the period between 1938 and 1940 brought to light the issue of Romania's public debts to the Western powers and the United States. King Carol's drive to obtain arms and equipment from the United States and his requests for credits obliged the American banks and private manufacturers to evaluate Romania's credit worthiness.

Romanian officials regarded the issue of armaments and credits as being one with deep political and international implications--a means to stop German economic penetration in East Central Europe and to preserve the political sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The American side viewed the same problems in much more economic terms--the ultimate question was whether Romania would be able or not to pay back any money loaned. As Minister Gunther said, "...our banks presumably were not particularly interested in the point of policy as to just how far we might wish to go, if we could, to counteract German economic penetration."³¹ American officials had not forgotten the Romanian debt toward the United States, although Romania had announced it would stop payments after the Hoover Moratorium of 1932. Unlike Romania, Americans regarded with respect Finland and Hungary because they had paid their war debts.

Starting in 1938, Romania was willing to negotiate a reasonable settlement of its public debts in the United States. The debts included the Romanian war debt, the payment of which was halted on August 14, 1933, and the 1929 stabilization and development loan

³¹ N.A., 871.24/151.

which was the biggest issue.³² In 1929, the Romanian Peasant Party contracted a seven percent stabilization loan, payable in three currencies: American dollars, French francs, and English pounds. The loan was guaranteed with bonds issued by the Kingdom of Romania Monopolies Institute. This institution was created by the “Law Concerning the Creation of the Institute” promulgated by the Kingdom of Romania in accordance with the “Program of the Romanian Government for Monetary Stabilization and Economic Development,” which constituted Annex A to the Monetary Law adopted and promulgated on February 7, 1929. The Institute was owned by the Romanian state. Its revenues were derived from the government monopolies of tobacco, salt, matches, explosives, cigarette paper, and playing cards and were allotted to the service of the Romanian public debt. The fiscal agents of the Romanian government in the United States were City Bank Farmers Trust Co. (which succeeded to Blair & Co.), the Chase National Bank of New York, and Dillon, Read & Co.³³

Because of the unfavorable trade balance between Romania and the United States, payments could only be made through the transformation of Romanian exports into dollars. The Great Depression and the difficulties encountered by Romanian exporters, especially those of raw materials, like grains, wood, and oil, made the further payment of dividends impossible. In 1934, to solve the situation, the Romanian government asked its Western creditors, including the United States, for a tri-annual arrangement adapted to its weak payment capabilities. The agreement between Romania and its European creditors

³² New York Times, May 5, 1939, 40.

³³ N.A., 871.51/169.

was signed on July 24, 1934, and renewed in 1937, without the participation of the American side whose members refused to take part. The situation was further complicated by the worsening of Romanian trade with the West and the blockage of its funds abroad. The only remaining means by which Romania could pay interest on bonds held by foreigners was through clearing agreements with the countries in which the bond holders were citizens. These understandings were very detrimental to the Romanian economy.³⁴ Romania even instituted a monetary premium for the creditor countries with which she had clearing agreements in order to stimulate their interest in Romanian exports.³⁵ The payment of the Romanian bonds in the United States was rendered harder by the lack of any clearing arrangement between the two countries. The U.S. Department of State, particularly Cordell Hull, believed such agreements would have harmful effects on trade and would lead ultimately to the unbalancing of international economic relations.³⁶

The American holders of Romanian Institute External Sinking Fund Gold Bonds became members of the Foreign Bondholders Protective Council, Inc., which represented their interests with the foreign governments. Starting in 1937, this financial organization contacted the Romanian authorities to push for a settlement of the Romanian

³⁴ For example, the clearing agreement with Great Britain contained the stipulation that sixty percent of the proceeds of the sale of Romanian exports in England must be used for the purchase of British commodities, thirty percent for service on British-owned bonds or other debt payments to residents of Great Britain, and only ten percent of the sterling exchange created by exports were to be used by Romania for the maintenance of its Legation and Consulates in Great Britain and for any other purpose. (N.A., 871.51 Rumanian Loan/187).

³⁵ Memorandum of the Royal Romanian Legation in Washington. N.A., 871.51RL/157.

³⁶ N.A., 871.51RL/187.

government's obligations. This year was of importance for the Romanian and American sides. Not only were the Paris agreements renewed, but also large quantities of Romanian foreign bonds were purchased at a big discount on foreign markets and brought back to Romania to secure the payment of interest in lei. A royal decree asked that all repatriated bonds be registered and the dollar coupons be paid at an exchange rate of 167.18 lei per dollar. Although the Foreign Bondholders Protective Council was sympathetic with Romania's delicate economic situation, it also acknowledged the American bondholders' impatience with and criticism of Romania. The Minister of Finance expressed his desire to reach an understanding with the American side and advised it to join the Paris agreements of 1934 and 1937.³⁷

At least two civil cases were brought against the Kingdom of Romania by American citizens in the United States--*Hannes v. Kingdom of Romania* and *Lichtenstein v. Kingdom of Romania*--in which the Romanian government claimed its right of immunity. For example, in 1939, Lillian Hannes, a resident of the New York State, sued the Romanian government for \$33,600 in unpaid interest coupons. As part of her action, she obtained a warrant of attachment against funds allegedly owned by the Institute on deposit with the City Bank Farmers Trust Company.³⁸ Herman Cooper, the lawyer for Lillian Hannes, wrote to Cordell Hull and denied Romanian government's right to seek immunity. He cited a case in 1924 when Romanian courts placed in the "jus gestionis" category--not entitled to sovereign immunity--transactions relating to the tobacco

³⁷ N.A., 871.51RL/165, 157.

³⁸ New York Times, June 21, 1940, 33.

monopoly of the Polish government.³⁹ The State Department replied that it could not take an official position toward the matter and authorized the State of New York's Supreme Court to uphold or deny the immunity of the Romanian state. Until 1940, the matters were not solved between the Romanian government and the American bondholders.⁴⁰

The constant attention given to the military needs of the Romanian government changed the structure and priorities of Romanian trade. In the fall of 1939, Frederick Hibbard warned the State Department that Romania's imports from the United States "would be restricted to commodities deemed of vital importance to national defense"--arms and raw materials destined for the local armament industry.⁴¹ "Luxury" imports would be severely curtailed if not entirely stopped. No dollar exchange was provided for imports from the United States during the second quarter of 1938, with the exception of those items considered essential by the Romanian government--automotive vehicles, oil well machinery, and certain raw and other material needed for armaments or other manufactures.⁴²

³⁹ The Romanian court held that when a state undertakes activities of a commercial nature, similar in nature to those in which an individual would engage, controversies arising out of such transactions are subject to the jurisdiction of foreign courts in the same manner as if an individual were involved. (N.A., 871.51RL/172).

⁴⁰ In addition to the Romanian government's debts to the United States' citizens, there were also the unpaid debts of Romanian companies or private citizens for American merchandise which totaled \$25,408.13 in June 1938. Between this time and July 1939, were already liquidated another \$13,197.46. The remainder consisted of sums owed by bad debtors and collection could be effected only through continued pressure or court action. (N.A., 871.5151/142).

⁴¹ N.A., 871.24/180,193.

⁴² N.A., 871.4061MP/21. The quota of exchange earmarked for imports from any country during a certain quarter was based on the exports to that country during the preceding

Motion pictures, although occupying an important part in the trade relations between Romania and the United States,⁴³ suffered from the lack of dollar exchange and the constant modifications of the Romanian tax system. Harold Smith, the representative of MPPDA in Paris, repeatedly expressed his concern with the high Romanian taxes which drove motion picture theater owners out of business. As a result, the distributors of American movies found it difficult to conduct business in Romania. Paramount closed its offices in Romania in June 1939.⁴⁴ Smith requested Gunther to ask Romanian officials to have at least the import duties reduced. The latter was aware that because taxes were an internal problem, he could not intervene.

The Romanian distributors for the five major American motion picture companies complained about the difficulties they encountered in obtaining import authorizations and obtaining advertising material sent over from the United States. Up to the end of 1937, motion pictures were imported into Romania on the basis of import authorizations and film quotas issued quarterly by the Ministry of Industries and Commerce. Payments were made through the compensation system, in foreign exchange available to exporters after obtaining approval from the Romanian National Bank.⁴⁵ At the beginning of 1938, the

quarter. Exports to the United States during the first quarter of 1938 amounted to only 81 million lei while imports were valued at 262 million lei. The Romanian National Bank simply did not have the dollar exchange to allow more American imports. (Ibid.)

⁴³ The import of American movies brought indirectly considerable revenue to the Romanian treasury. Gunther Mott estimated gains of approximately 500 million lei per year from different taxes on the motion picture business. (N.A., 871.4061MP/21).

⁴⁴ N.A., 871.4061MP/26.

⁴⁵ The object of the system of compensation trading was to stimulate the exportation of certain selected goods, included on a list A, which normally were difficult to market abroad. Exporters of these goods were permitted to retain varying percentages of the resulting exchange and sell it, at a price established by negotiation, to importers of another

Ministry of Industry and Commerce issued instructions that the importation of motion pictures from the United States on the basis of the “compensation” system were to be made only in compensation for peas. The local film dealers complained that exportation of peas from Romania was very limited and the growing season was over. Thus, they lacked dollars to continue motion pictures importation and found their businesses at a standstill.⁴⁶ The unresolved issue of discrimination against American goods rose again. The Division of European Affairs, Department of State, and the American Legation in Bucharest were flooded with letters from the Paris office of Harold Smith who requested a firm U.S. intervention to restore motion picture rights in Romania. Smith’s main argument for such official interference was that importation of German, Italian, Polish, and other foreign films to Romania allegedly could be done without any currency problems.

On May 17, 1938, Gunther saw Mitita Constantinescu, Minister of National Economy and Governor of the Romanian National Bank, who was not sympathetic to the compensation system. The American Minister then asked for a return to the situation existing before September 1937, with the understanding that the film distributors would export everything to the United States in their own names and for their own account.⁴⁷

The local distributors were willing, after securing licenses, to export whatever products

restricted list of goods included on a list B. For more details, see Mircea Musat and Ion Ardeleanu, Romania dupa Marea Unire (Romania after the Great Union), Volume 2, Part 2, November 1933-September 1940 (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1989), pp. 46-55 and 79-90.

⁴⁶ N.A., 871.4061 MP/14. As Gunther humorously noted, “The fortunate exporters of peas have found themselves in the possession of a monopoly of exchange which motion picture importers have been forced to purchase at exaggerated prices.” (N.A., 871.4061MP/22).

⁴⁷ N.A., 871.4061MP/19.

they could to the United States with the right to retain the resulting exchange for the payment of royalties or other debts to the American film industry. In case no dollar sources would be found, the distributors of U.S. motion pictures in Romania threatened to boycott film importation from the United States.⁴⁸

The Romanian Minister of Economy could not ignore the fact that American movies had the largest share of the Romanian motion picture market and appeared to be the favorite of Romanian viewers. An eventual halt to U.S. film importation would therefore have led to the closing of some theaters. At the end of June 1938, due in part to the diligent efforts of Gunther and the intervention of the Romanian Foreign Minister, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, the Ministry of Economy decided to include motion pictures on compensation list B.⁴⁹

By the end of 1938, motion picture distributors in Romania had something to celebrate and their troubles seemed to be over. I.D. Suchianu, a reputable Romanian film critic who was sympathetic to the American film industry, was named head of the Romanian Motion Picture Office and the Board of Censors.⁵⁰ He favored the expansion

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ N.A., 871.4061MP/22. The exchange dollars were to be provided by the exportation of Romanian lard; canned meats of any kind; dressed poultry; Romanian rugs; lucern, clover, and other forage seeds except peas; mustard and poppy seeds; hemp, flax, and sunflower seeds; tomato extract and juice; canned fruits and vegetables; liquors; plum brandy (*tuica*); champagne; and native knit goods and embroideries.

⁵⁰ He was anti-Nazi, the brother-in-law of the Minister of Labor, Mihail Ralea, and first-cousin of the Minister of Interior and future Prime-Minister, Armand Calinescu. Minister Gunther praised his commitment to American films: "I was struck by his keen interest in furthering the market for American motion pictures in this country as well as by his eagerness to espouse the cause of the motion picture distributors." (N.A., 871.4061MP/24).

of the American movie market in Romania and helped a series of movies, which were rejected before his appointment, meet Romanian censorship guidelines. Suchianu expressed his willingness to grant a “concession” to the local representatives of the American motion picture industry for the distribution of educational films.⁵¹ Since they never made money on such movies, he suggested a scale of exhibition fees on such films to be paid by every motion picture theater in the country. In return, the profits would be split in three parts between the film distributors--fifty percent, the Cultural Propaganda Fund--twenty percent, and the members of the Board of Censors--thirty percent.⁵²

In making this proposal, Suchianu tried to counteract the efforts of a Sibiu independent motion picture distribution company, Astra Culturala, the owner of the big Aro theater in Bucharest, among others, to monopolize the distribution of educational films in Romania. Because most members of Astra Culturala were of German origin, Suchianu was afraid that granting them this monopoly would lead to the exclusive exhibition of German educational films devoted to Nazi propaganda. Unfortunately, the continental managers for the American companies who sold films to Romania did not understand the importance of the proposal and considered it a dangerous establishment of a monopoly. They even threatened that if Suchianu persisted in his plan to form a monopoly, the American companies might withdraw from Romania.⁵³

⁵¹ All motion picture theaters in Romania were required by law to open their presentations with an educational film.

⁵² N.A., 871.4061MP/24.

⁵³ Ibid.

Despite Romania's efforts to regulate its trade with the United States, the economic and financial relations between the two countries remained tenuous and even diminished with the beginning of World War II and the continual investments by German firms in the Romanian economy. The problem of debt put a strain on the relationship between the two countries and negatively affected Romania's image in the eyes of American bankers and businessmen. Also, the motion picture industry was mostly inclined to stop doing business with the Romanian state due to its tight control on hard currency. The documents cited in this thesis could point toward the conclusion that Romania tried to orient its armament requests toward the United States, especially after March 1939. Romanian officials were aware that Romania's European contractors--Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, and France--were having a hard time meeting their own needs. But the United States decided to pay more attention to their own strategic and defensive needs. Therefore, Romania found it impossible to acquire the necessary means of ensuring an effective defense. Its continuous political and military isolation was accompanied by a gradual, but important orientation toward Germany's sphere of influence, in hope of obtaining armaments in exchange for grain and oil.

Chapter 4--The Image of Romania and Her Rulers: A View of the American Press

In democratic societies, mass-media and public organizations seek to and to some extent do influence the decision-making in foreign policy. They also express public opinion toward events, countries, and personalities. Particularly in the United States, the media has played an important role in shaping public perceptions of foreign countries. In the late 1930s, Romania's image in American media and government documents was conditioned by some important issues, such as Romania's treatment of ethnic minorities, in particular the Jewish population, the extent to which King Carol's dictatorship appeared to improve Romanian national stability against Germany and the Soviet Union, and Romania's geo-strategic position in the Balkans and its natural resources.

Up to the early 1930s, the American citizens knew Romania as a kingdom characterized by an interesting and puzzling melange of intrigue, corruption, and romanticism. Queen Marie's undeniable personal charm gave rise to numerous rumors, explicitly detailed in European and American newspapers, about her innumerable love affairs. Her son, the young and restless Prince Carol of Romania, also made the front pages of the yellow press in the 1920s with his amorous adventurous youth.¹ In June 1930, the Romanian royal family again became front page news when Prince Carol

¹ In 1918, Prince Carol of Romania deserted the Romanian army and married the commoner Zizi Lambrino. He also sent a letter to the Parliament that he renounced his right to the throne. Through the diligent efforts of Queen Marie, his marriage was annulled as incompatible with the status of the Royal Romanian House. In 1925, Carol left for Western Europe and established with his mistress, Elena Lupescu, in France. In January 1926, the Romanian Parliament revoked his rights to the throne and declared his young son Michael as future king under a Regency with three members.

returned suddenly from exile and claimed his right to the throne. Romania was often portrayed by the American press as a “colorful kingdom” with happy, carefree people and rich natural resources.² Some journalists contended that “the average Rumanian was a kindly, easy-going fellow who did not care, and had no intention to make any effort.”³ Also, the Romanians’ capacity to govern themselves was sometimes questioned by the American media. A 1939 article in the New York Times described Romania’s government as one familiar with “assassination, corruption, and romanticism.”⁴ Sumner Welles, the U.S. Undersecretary of State in the 1930s, also took a critical view of Romanian politics:

Popular government had never in reality existed, and there had been no real foundation for the establishment of popular authority. The government had all been superstructure--and superstructure of the shoddiest variety. That was why, in the late thirties, we saw the final collapse of national authority into such grotesque forms as the Goga and Antonescu governments; such Nazi-inspired aberrations as Codreanu and the Iron Guard; and the hysterical resort, through Hitler’s influence, to such hideous atrocities as those committed upon the Jewish people.⁵

The interest of the American press about Romania in late 1930s was obvious from the telegrams sent by the Romanian Legation in Washington to the Ministry of Propaganda in Bucharest. In October 1939, Horia Babes, Press Secretary at the Romanian Legation in Washington, asked Alexandru Radian, the Minister of Propaganda,

² The New Republic, October 26, 1938, p. 325.

³ Shandon Hastings, “Romania’s Uneasy Seat,” Current History, March 1939, p. 38.

⁴ New York Times, September 24, 1939, 39.

⁵ Welles, p. 251.

for new photos as well as big and detailed maps of Romania because the main U.S. newspapers and magazines incessantly demanded these materials.⁶

From his coming to power until December 1937, King Carol II experimented with various strategies designed to undermine the traditional political parties and to convert the Romanian political system into a royal dictatorship. The December 1937 elections marked an interesting point in the internal political life of Romania. Their result indicated the electorate's confusion about the struggle for power between the traditional parties, the National Liberal Party and the National Peasant Party. No party obtained the forty percent of votes necessary to form a parliamentary majority. Moreover, the right-wing parties whose programs promised a new politics without corruption or political games won a good share of votes--the "All for the Country" party (the new name adopted by the Iron Guard) won 15.58 percent and the Goga-Cuza National Christian Party won 9.15 percent.⁷ Both of these political formations were strongly nationalistic and anti-Semitic and sympathized with Nazism and Italian Fascism. Nevertheless, the Iron Guard was more prone to employ violent methods and was better organized than its main right-wing competitor, the Goga-Cuza party. Some journalists perceived the essence of the Iron Guard which had deep roots in local anti-Semitism and proclaimed the superiority of the national culture over those of European Western nations. For example, the American journalist Anne O'Hare McCormick described the Iron Guard as being "Nazi in spirit and

⁶ Arhivele Statului, Bucuresti, Ministerul Propagandei Nationale, Dosar 720, Presă Externa, Fila 1 (State Archives, Bucharest, Romania, Ministry of National Propaganda, Fila 720, Foreign Press, Page 1).

⁷ Al. Savu, Dictatura regală (The Royal Dictatorship) (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1970), p. 115.

in much of its program. But it was about ninety-percent Rumanian Nazi, fiercely nationalist, revolutionary, uniting some of the best elements of the young in a protest against corruption, incompetence, and inertia in high places.”⁸ The Iron Guard attracted the interest of the American intelligence, especially after the beginning of the war and German military and political penetration of East Central Europe. In 1940, U.S. Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, requested Colonel William Donovan and Edgar Mowrer “to make a thorough investigation of the German methods used in weakening the resistance of possible enemies and of undermining the morale of the countries they propose to attack.” The Romanian right-wing party was considered a subsidiary member of the Auslandorganisation (Organization Abroad) and in the pay of Nazi Germany.⁹

King Carol decided that this was the right moment to fulfill his dream of a royal dictatorship. He brought to power the Goga-Cuza party, the rival of the Iron Guard, in a short-term government of forty-four days. Its rule was enough to compromise the attraction of right-wing ideas and to encourage people’s preferences for having an authoritarian ruler. As Minister Gunther observed, “the King had concluded that the present was not a bad time to give nationalism a little rope and better to try it out now with this Government than to have to later with the Iron Guard.”¹⁰ Particularly, the anti-Semitic legislation of the National Christian Party, although not entirely enforced, proved

⁸ Anne O’Hare McCormick, “Events Disposed of Carol and a New ‘Strong Man’ Begins,” The New York Times, September 7, 1940, 16. Also, Time magazine named the Iron Guard, “the Ku Klux Rumanian organization,” Time, September 16, 1940, p. 34.

⁹ Whitney Shepardson, The United States in World Affairs: An Account of American Foreign Relations, 1938 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), p. 325-326.

¹⁰ FRUS, 1938, II, p. 674.

sterile and detrimental for the Romanian economy.¹¹ In February 1938, Carol seemed the right person to establish order and discipline in Romania. The new constitution organized Romania as a corporatist state and gave the King generous governing powers. Carol named a puppet-government under the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Miron Cristea and outlawed all political parties. Instead he created the inclusive National Rebirth Front, designed to mobilize popular support for the King and help reorganize Romania along corporatist lines.

The changes in the Romanian political structure, particularly the bringing to power of an openly anti-Semitic party, worried the Western democracies which did not understand the ultimate goal of the King's move. In the biography of his grandfather, Paul of Hohenzollern noted that Carol "failed ... to take in account the repercussions of the appointment outside the country, where it was seen as an anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi move."¹²

The Romanian government made no secret of its desire for Romanian Jews to emigrate. It did not oppose their leaving and facilitated their transfer. In a telegram dated January 5, 1938, Gunther expressed his opinion that "the Government was intentionally frightening Jews into leaving the country voluntarily and ... it would proceed with extreme caution in the formulation and execution of any concrete measures."¹³ Romanian officials talked about a Jewish problem in their country and directed their pleas for help to the international organizations, such as the League of Nations and the Intergovernmental

¹¹ Most of the businesses and commercial activities were owned by Romanian citizens of Jewish ancestry.

¹² Paul of Hohenzollern, King Carol II: A Life of My Grandfather (London: Methuen, 1988), p. 176.

¹³ FRUS, 1938, II, p. 672-673.

Committee. They asked the two organizations to devise a method of emigration of at least a small percentage of Romanian Jews, about 50,000.¹⁴ Gunther tried to maintain an objective outlook on the Jewish “problem” in Romania and reported that “actual Governmental regulation of the Jewish population was really of no outstanding severity.”¹⁵

The problem of minorities became more complicated because of the Minorities Law of January 1938 which divided the Jewish population into two groups. The first included approximately 800,000 Jews, who had established their status as Romanian citizens. The other group numbered about 200,000 Jews who could not prove their citizenship and were declared “foreigners.” The Romanian government tried to get rid of the second group by deporting them or encouraging them to leave the country on their own account. As Minister Gunther wrote in one of his reports, “The attitude of the Rumanian government was that this surplus of population of non-citizen Jews must go;

¹⁴ Ibid., 1939, II, p. 10. The Intergovernmental Committee was an organization created at the initiative of the United States at the Evian Refugee Conference in 1938. It had three objectives: to arrange for orderly emigration of refugees from Germany to negotiate with countries of settlement ... and to help set up an international corporation for the financing of refugees from Germany. It soon became clear that Germany’s Jews were the first priority of the Committee because they were endangered by the pogroms. FRUS, 1939, II, p. 102.

¹⁵ Ibid. His biggest fears were related to the arbitrary and corrupt procedures which characterized Romanian local administration. Gunther was alarmed that “administrative practice in applying laws and regulations offered large possibilities of discrimination against the Jews.” Even in August 1940, Frederick Hibbard remarked that the Romanian Jews were not disturbed by some Romanian legislation directed against them. “They knew,” said the Secretary of the American Legation, “that repressive laws usually were not nearly as bad as they sounded, that application and interpretation were of far more importance than the latter, that Governments and programs changed fast and that anti-Semitic fever was like the malarial and flares up only to subside again.” The application of the laws by the Romanian administration, mostly corrupt, was most times different than the letter of the law.

there would be no pogrom, no violence, no brutality, but they must go.”¹⁶ A large part of the Romanian Jewish emigration aimed to go to the United States. In 1938, there were approximately 15,000 visa applications for emigration at the American Legation in Bucharest, ninety-eight percent of which were made by the Jews.¹⁷

Anti-Semitism in Romania was a subject that constantly preoccupied American officials, organizations, and the media. In the United States, Carol’s decision to bring the Goga-Cuza party and its anti-Semitic program to power produced a wave of protests from the American media and public organizations. As a demonstration of his opposition to the anti-Semitic measures of the new Romanian government, the Romanian Minister to Washington, Charles Davilla, resigned. The appointment of his successor, Major Radu Irimescu, was received with misgivings by American Jews. Republican Senator Lonergan from Connecticut expressed to the U.S. Secretary of State the anxiety of the American Jewish Congress about Irimescu’s former membership in the Goga government. (By the time of Irimescu’s appointment, the Goga-Cuza government had already resigned and the King installed his personal dictatorship).¹⁸ Cordell Hull replied by praising the good credentials of the new Minister, including his degree in engineering at Columbia University in 1920, his marriage to an American, his work experience with New York banking firms (he was for a while director of the Chrissoveloni Bank), and the good recommendations from the last three American Ministers to Bucharest.¹⁹ Hull assured the Jewish Congress

¹⁶ N.A., 871.4016Jews/110.

¹⁷ N.A., Record Group 84, American Legation in Bucharest. General Records, Box 1.

¹⁸ New York Times, March 11, 1938, 9.

¹⁹ Ibid.

that there was no cause to be worried and that Romania would be fairly represented by Irimescu.

One vocal critic of the new Romanian government was the Jewish War Veterans of the United States. On February 18, 1938, in their meeting in Camden, New Jersey, they drafted a petition to President Roosevelt in which they asked him

to intercede with the Rumanian government to cease its viciously unjust discrimination against its racial and religious minorities and above all put an end to its cruel and barbarous mistreatment of innocent Jewish citizens and protect their lives and property in accordance with the covenants of existing international treaties to which the kingdom of Rumania is a party.²⁰

The Jewish veterans asked the American government to interrupt the U.S. diplomatic relations with Romania in case their plea was ignored by the Romanian government.

American religious organizations held a poor opinion of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarch. Before becoming Prime Minister, Miron Cristea made some unfavorable comments about the Romanian Jews, accusing them of being corrupt. His opinion was widely criticized by U.S. Christian publications, such as The Churchman. The American press did not even want to consider the publication of a letter of Patriarch Cristea to Dr. Niemirover, the Chief Rabi of the United States.²¹ Also, the American Committee on Religious Rights and Minorities objected to articles in Solia, the official organ of the Romanian Orthodox Church in America, which expressed the rightist and anti-Semitic

²⁰ N.A., 871.4016Jews/95.

²¹ The letter was translated by American historian Charles Upson Clark. State Archives, Bucharest, Romania, Ministry of National Propaganda, File 485, Foreign Press, page 22. The letter was finally published by Foia Poporului (People's Newspaper), Cleveland, Ohio.

sympathies of some of its members, including the Bishop. In a letter to Sumner Welles, the U.S. Undersecretary of State, the Committee complained about the articles in Solia which “tended to propagate among American-Romanians the same racial hatred which had so shamefully and disastrously resulted in persecution in Romania.”²² On some occasions, the American press included favorable comments on Romania’s treatment of minorities. For example, the New York Times congratulated the Romanian government for the new minority law of July 1938 which gave equal rights to all citizens regardless of their country of birth and named it one of the most liberal in East-Central Europe.²³

Officials in Washington approached the problem of the treatment of minorities diplomatically and cautiously. The U.S. State Department, although well informed about the Jewish issue in Romania, did not make any official protests and kept away from the problem as long as the interests of American citizens were not involved. In a letter to Congressman Charles Wolverton, the State Department asserted that, “The American government, in the absence of treaty provisions, could not intervene in the domestic affairs of another country, except in special circumstances where American citizens or interests were involved.”²⁴ In a conversation with Pierrepont Moffat, Horia Babes, Romanian Charge d’Affaires, noted that “although much publicity had been given to the reports of anti-Semitic excesses in Romania, virtually no publicity had been given to a State Department letter pointing out that it could not intervene in the Romanian picture.”²⁵

²² N.A., 871.4016/217.

²³ The New York Times, August 6, 1938, 2.

²⁴ N.A., 871.4016Jews/95. Wolverton endorsed to the U.S. State Department a protest letter from the Jewish War Veterans of the United States.

²⁵ N.A., 871.4016Jews/97.

U.S. diplomats regarded the issue of minorities as exclusively a Romanian problem and did not want to meddle in the internal affairs of that country. Nevertheless, the American media and humanitarian organizations continued to pressure the U.S. government to ask for improvements in the treatment of Romanian Jews. The Romanian government agreed with the State Department's position that the treatment of Romanian Jews was an internal problem and should not be the object of foreign concerns. Romanian officials regarded the critical articles in the American press and the interventions in Congress as mere noise started by politicians eager to attract the votes of the American Jewish population.²⁶

American-Hungarians were the other group which used its influence in the United States to protest against the treatment of their co-nationals in Romania. Due to the freedom of expression of the American press and the actions of a powerful lobby in the U.S. Congress, they succeeded to increasing the negative perception of Romania.²⁷ The Congress of Hungarians and Hungarian Americans living in the United States and Canada expressed their opposition to the alleged persecution of their 2,000,000 co-nationals living in Romania.²⁸ Their actions did not elicit a direct inquiry by the State Department to the Romanian government but it further perverted the image of Romania in the United States as an uncivilized and persecutory state.

²⁶ Opinion expressed by Horia Babes in a telegram to Alexandru Radian. State Archives, Bucharest, Ministry of Propaganda, File 485, Foreign Press, Page 67.

²⁷ The American journalist Vernon McKenzie commented upon the Hungarians that, unlike Romanians, they can lead a vigorous press campaign for revision. Part of their action was "to wreck the Rumanian government, if possible." Vernon McKenzie, Through Turbulent Years, (New York: Robert McBride and Co., 1938), p. 130.

²⁸ The New York Times, March 13, 1938, 35.

The American press intensely commented on Carol's decision to bring the Goga-Cuza party to power. Most of the United States' media and foreign policy analysts tried as best they could to interpret the King's move. For example, Peter Drucker in his Harper's Magazine article praised the shrewdness of Carol in compromising the right-wing movement and imposing his own regime:

King Carol, in one of the most astute and most unscrupulous maneuvers in the whole machiavellian history of the Balkan politics first divided the Fascist movement against itself by appointing the minority leader, Goga, to be Prime-Minister in December 1937; then by forcing Goga to "Nazify" the country in haste he managed to destroy all popular support for Nazism.²⁹

Indeed, the weak Goga-Cuza party was not able to contain the anti-Semitic and nationalist agitation initiated by the Iron Guard to destabilize Romania's internal situation. Carol II began his dictatorship under the pretext of establishing order and discipline in the country. Journalists acknowledged the fact that the National Christian Party in power did not mean Romania's adoption of a Nazi regime. The Nation opined that had Carol "wanted to turn the country over to a veritable, dynamic totalitarian, he would have called upon Codreanu or Vaida-Voevod.... The purpose of the royal move was thus clear enough: it was a maneuver to preserve and consolidate the throne, to crush the peasant left, and by the same stroke to take the wind of Codreanu's sails."³⁰

²⁹ Peter Drucker, "Can Germany Win the Balkans?," Harper's Magazine, January 1939, p. 150.

³⁰ The Nation, January 8, 1938, p. 34. Also, Ronald Stuart Kain opined, "King Carol established his own Fascist regime as a means of fighting Nazism directed from Berlin. The Fox of the Balkans, as Carol had come to be called, proved ... ruthless, shrewd, and successful." Ronald Stuart Kain, Europe: Versailles to Warsaw (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1939), p. 256.

Albert Carr analyzed the Romanian dictatorship in the context of the economic and social situation in the Balkans. He documented that Carol's aims were to antagonize the two main right-wing parties--the Iron Guard and the National Christian Party--and to establish his own dictatorship. This development had become necessary in order to avoid Romania's complete domination of Berlin. Carr concluded that Carol based his dictatorship on the peasants and his reforms appealed mainly to this particular segment of the Romanian population.³¹

The European and American journalists who visited Romania between 1938 and 1940 praised King Carol's efforts to expand Romania's poorly developed industry and to educate the peasants who formed seventy-eight percent of the Romanian population. Most of them observed the amazing urban development of Bucharest, which occurred in the 1930s, and contrasted with the poverty and social and economic backwardness of the countryside. G.E.R. Gedye, Chief Central Europe Correspondent of the New York Times, described in grim and critical words the social consequences of rapid urbanization in Bucharest. The houses in the poorest quarters, related Gedye, "were tumble-down, overcrowded shacks at which a well-bred American hog would turn up his snout."³² At the same time, he noted the large number of foreign cars filling the streets of the "little Paris," as Bucharest was called in the 1930s.³³ The American press emphasized King Carol's policy achievements, such as budgetary equilibrium, grants for the armed forces,

³¹ Albert Carr, Juggernaut: The Path of Dictatorship (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), pp. 141-145.

³² New York Times, February 3, 1938, 16.

³³ Ibid.

cheaper money, extensive public health campaigns, a new minority statute, and reforms in the administrative, judicial and educational fields. This favorable picture was considered a solid asset for the future resistance by Romania to German economic pressures.

Nevertheless, the press acknowledged Romania's need to augment its trade with the West in order to avoid increasing dependency on Germany.³⁴

The former royal playboy had become a shrewd if authoritarian leader, trying to play his cards with the Western democracies against Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. In the eyes of part of the American media, Carol II appeared as the savior of Romania and, possibly, of Eastern Europe by keeping the Romanian right-wing under control and putting a stop to the internal political unrest. Contemporary analysts perceived the royal dictatorship as a shrewd solution for keeping Romania succumbing to a fascist government, dependent on Berlin, and for preserving Romania's Western orientation. The New York Times Magazine talked about Carol as making "history for his country and perhaps also for all the world. Rumania was now in the cockpit of European politics...."³⁵

The American press regarded the Balkans as a region where the interests of the Great Powers clashed. No state was able to maintain its independence without seeking protection from a European power. In the late 1930s, the situation became more complicated because Germany and Italy began an aggressive campaign to attract the Balkan states to their camp. In this context, Romania was a strategically important

³⁴ "Where the Axes Cross. II. Rumania in Suspense," The Living Age, July 1939, p. 416. For a British view on Romania and King Carol's achievements, see Charles Petrie, "Rumania," The Quarterly Review 272 (April 1939), pp. 308-323.

³⁵ The New York Times, September 11, 1938, 11.

country where German, Russian, French, and British interests collided. King Carol was portrayed as balancing Romania's fate among them. Journalists went so far as to see the dictatorship as part of a broad Western strategy to keep Germany out of Romania and to stop Germany's "Drang nach Osten." The New York Times of February 16, 1938, speculated that "larger interests than King Carol's were involved in the outcome of his efforts to forestall a Nazi dictatorship by doing it first.... The change in the regime was the first spectacular Rome-Berlin defeat and proved that the democratic powers could exercise effective pressure when they wish."³⁶ The Times saw King Carol's dictatorship as the pillar of country's internal stability and a regional leader on which Britain and France could rely. As late as February 1940, Life dedicated almost an entire issue to the Romanian king and his heir, Prince Mihai, and commented that, unlike Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland which were swallowed up by Germany, Romania had by complicated diplomatic maneuvers succeeded in preserving its independence and territory. "Carol," said one article, "was the smartest politician in the Balkans. Surrounded by land-hungry nations, he made a deal with Germany one day, a concession to England the next, countered a Russian move the third and had not yet been cornered by anybody."³⁷

Between 1938 and 1940, European and American journalists considered King Carol a decisive actor in preventing Romania's total surrender to Germany's sphere of influence and in maintaining its friendly attitude toward the Western powers and its

³⁶ The New York Times, February 16, 1939, 2.

³⁷ Life, February 19, 1940, p. 77. Unfortunately, the praising of King Carol's allegedly clever foreign policy strategy "to place a bet on every possible winner and keep them all guessing" did not prevent Romania's gradual international isolation and the territorial losses of the summer of 1940.

commitments to the regional alliances. American magazines and newspapers, as well as foreign policy journals acknowledged Romania's strategic position in Eastern Europe and the potential importance of its natural resources for Germany. In 1940, The New Republic named Romania the country "which holds the key to the whole situation in the Danube basin."³⁸ Of the riverane countries, she was the only one with strong ties with the Western powers and especially France. Also, Romania's geographic position at the Danube's outlet into the Black Sea was vital for Germany's or Russia's expansion to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and from there into the Middle East. Peter Drucker opined that the Nazis sought the domination of the countries of the Lower Danube because "it was the only way to make German "Wehrwirtschaft" work in time of war or severe internal stress, by insuring an adequate and dependable supply of foodstuffs and raw materials when all other sources were blocked."³⁹

The American journalist Vernon McKenzie stressed the importance of Romanian oil in any future European war: "Oil in tremendous and overflowing quantities was the backbone of Rumanian wealth and was the prize which half a dozen European countries were seeking to possess, or control, in the event of another World War."⁴⁰ Oil, together with grains, were repeatedly cited by journalists and diplomats as Romania's main riches. These resources made her indispensable for Hitler's war preparations in the last years of the 1930s. Concerning the particular importance of Romanian oil to Hitler, Jonathan Griffin of The Nation asserted, "In Rumania lay the only large oil wells in non-Russian

³⁸ The New Republic, January 4, 1940, p. 245.

³⁹ Drucker, "Can Germany Win?," p. 148.

⁴⁰ McKenzie, p. 128.

Europe. Hitler wanted to get those oil wells, and to get them intact. He would therefore try to do without armed invasion--try to make Rumania, by simple threats, produce and deliver oil to meet his needs."⁴¹ At the same time, Romanian grains were necessary to feed the German people whose own food resources were inadequate. As Anne McCormick remarked, "Rumanian oil, wheat, and Black Sea ports were vital to the Germans in prosecuting the war."⁴²

After Poland's destruction, in September and October 1939, American diplomats and journalists considered Romania in danger of being the next target of the Nazi aggression. Its precarious position was explained by the fact that it

owned too many valuable properties and was located in a strategic place.... It contained not only considerable oil and grain, but also iron ore, coal, manganese, and bauxite--properties valuable in times of war. It also occupied the mouth of Danube, a vital position. Finally, through its heart ran the Carpathian Mountains, which many westerly countries regarded as a European military barrier against invasion from the east.⁴³

Between 1938 and 1940, American journalists analyzed in detail Romania's foreign policy and its possibilities for survival against the Nazi storm. The Anschluss, and especially the Munich Agreement, made them question the future of Romania as an independent country. Rumors circulated that that country might be the next target on the list of Hitler's conquests. The American press acknowledged the delicate position of King Carol after Munich and predicted his eventual strengthening of Romania's relations with

⁴¹ Jonathan Griffin, "Will Rumania Fight?," The Nation, September 16, 1939, p. 285.

⁴² The New York Times, November 25, 1939, 16.

⁴³ Cyrus Sulzberger, "Rumania Is Beset by Many Worries," The New York Times, December 17, 1939, 5.

Germany. The New Republic asserted, "King Carol, perennially the realist untroubled by sentiment, knew that he could not long escape a decision about his relation with Hitler... The fate of Czechoslovakia had been a warning to Carol to come to terms with Hitler while it was still time to bargain."⁴⁴ After the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, William Bullitt transmitted to Washington his opinion that the Western European powers' main worry was Romania "which appeared to be next in line for an attack by Germany."⁴⁵

The suspicions of the American diplomat were shared by the American press. In his analysis of the German expansion in Eastern Europe, Paul Taylor admitted that the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia strengthened the Nazi position in the Balkans, especially because it got closer to Romania and Poland. Germany's economic objectives became obvious once the March 1939, economic agreement with Romania was signed. Paul Taylor interpreted the treaty as an important step toward Hitler's economic control of Southeastern Europe providing him with raw materials and grains and "absorb[ing] German finished products."⁴⁶ The worries of American journalists intensified after the occupation of Poland and the invasion of Subcarpathian Ukraine by the Soviet troops. The New York Times of September 24, 1939, opined, "Rumania, one of the richest states of the Balkans, appeared, because of the German-Russian rapprochement, to be in the most dangerous situation of any of those little neutrals of Europe which were still clinging

⁴⁴ "After Munich, What?," The New Republic, October 26, 1938, p. 325.

⁴⁵ FRUS, 1939, I, p. 129.

⁴⁶ Paul Taylor, "Germany's Expansion in Eastern Europe," Foreign Policy Reports, May 15, 1939, p. 59.

precariously to neutrality.”⁴⁷ Some journalists went so far as to say that Germany was the most interested in Romania of all the Eastern European countries. The latter was not only the ideal provider of grain, timber, and oil but also had a strategic position “as a bridge to the Soviet Union and Asia Minor.”⁴⁸

Remarkably, foreign correspondents of the time were able to see the Soviet peril too. They could not blame the Soviet Union too much because the Western powers hoped to have Stalin as an ally and did not want to interfere with his expansion plans in Eastern Europe.⁴⁹ It can be argued that, unlike Nazi Germany, the Soviet jeopardy was underestimated. After the beginning of war, The New Republic published an article trying to explain why the Western powers did not consider the Soviet Union a big danger for Eastern Europe, in spite of its territorial pretensions. The magazine talked about “a possible Allied campaign in the Danube Valley to stop the German blitzkrieg at the Polish-Rumanian frontier. To keep Russia from helping Germany, they had to agree on some concessions and one of them would be Bessarabia.”⁵⁰ The words of the American magazine came true six months later when no ally helped Romania resist the Soviet ultimatum to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.⁵¹

⁴⁷ The New York Times, September 24, 1939, 39.

⁴⁸ Stoyan Pribichevich, “The Nazi Drive to the East--Yugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary,” Foreign Policy Reports, October 15, 1939, p. 179.

⁴⁹ In his memoirs, Cordell Hull confessed, “I did not wish to alienate Russia, feeling that at some time she might veer away from her apparently close relationship with Germany.” Hull, p. 702.

⁵⁰ The New Republic, December 20, 1939, p. 258.

⁵¹ The New York Times foreign correspondent in Bucharest, Eugen Kovacs, was among the few journalists who noted the surprise of Romanian and German officials over the claim of Northern Bukovina by the Soviet Union. The New York Times, June 29, 1940, 8.

The territorial cessions forced upon Romania in the summer of 1940 were the objects of diverse commentaries in the American press, especially the inequitable outcome of the Vienna “Award.” Philip Mosely, Professor of History at Columbia University, wrote an article in which he analyzed the consequences of the cession of Transylvania for Romania and the Balkans area. He emphasized that Hitler decided to intervene in the Romanian-Hungarian dispute for fear of the Soviet Union taking advantage of the conflictual situation to fulfill its own territorial aspirations. Mosely gave an accurate and detailed perspective on the Hungarian claims on and the Romanian attachment to Transylvania and demonstrated with facts and figures that the majority of the population in the acquired province was Romanian.⁵² Therefore, the American historian concluded that “Hungary had acquired an ethnic problem almost as difficult as that of post-1918 Rumania.”⁵³

Mosely was a defender of Romania’s rights to the territories ceded in the summer of 1940. In another article, he advocated Romania’s rightful claims to Bessarabia. The American professor argued Romania’s right based on the history of the province before 1812, the vote of Sfatul Tarii (Council of the Land) in 1918, the ethnically Romanian majority of the population, and the moral recognition of Romanian sovereignty by England, France, and Italy in 1920.⁵⁴

Some journalists regarded the cession of Transylvania and Southern Dobrudja as necessary for peace in the Balkans. Although it sympathized with Romania’s losses, the

⁵² At Vienna, Hungary claimed the province exclusively on ethnic bases.

⁵³ Philip Mosely, “Transylvania Partitioned,” Foreign Affairs 1 (October 1940): 241.

⁵⁴ Mosely, “Is Bessarabia Next?,” Foreign Affairs 3 (April 1940): 561.

media regarded the dispute between Hungary and Romania over Transylvania as dangerous for the troubled zone of East Central Europe. Therefore, the arbitration at Vienna which decided in favor of Hungary appeared necessary for the preservation of peace in the region. Some American magazines emphasized the fact that because of the Soviet peril Romania had no choice but to accept the Vienna Dictate. The “red scare” made Romanian officials seek assistance from Germany in defending the remaining borders of the country.⁵⁵ Sovietophile journalist Louis Fischer labeled the Dictat a “Versailles imposed by Hitler on Rumania” which served Germany’s purpose of getting closer to its ultimate war target, Russia, and isolating Stalin from its aggrandizement objectives in the Balkans.⁵⁶ Also, from a strategic point of view, after its acquisition of Transylvania, Hungary had become a threat in case Soviet troops advanced from Bessarabia and Bukovina into Moldova, thus transforming Romania into a battlefield.

The unfavorable interpretations of some part of the American press were largely due to Hungary’s permanent challenging in the U.S. media or through lobbying in Congress of the Trianon treaty of 1919 which consecrated the legitimacy of Romanian claims on Transylvania. Hungarian-Americans regularly criticized Romania’s treatment of minorities and demanded the return of Transylvania. Therefore, the U.S. press sometimes prejudicially referred to Transylvania as “the annexed Hungarian lands.”⁵⁷ The anti-Romanian campaign waged by Hungarians prevented the American media from objectively

⁵⁵ The Nation, September 7, 1940, p. 206. At Vienna, Germany offered Romania complete guarantee of its frontiers after the cession of Transylvania was over.

⁵⁶ Louis Fisher, “Rumania’s New Versailles,” The Nation, September 14, 1940, p. 206.

⁵⁷ New York Times, March 13, 1938, 35.

reporting and analyzing the dispute over Transylvania. The number of Hungarian-Americans was larger than that of Romanian-Americans.⁵⁸ Also, the Hungarian immigration had a powerful intellectual elite unlike Romanian immigrants who were simple workers, with poor education and no political clout. Finally, the relationship between American Calvinists with the native Hungarian Presbyterians and of American Catholics with their co-religionists in Hungary improved that country's image in the United States. On the other hand, the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in the United States had no connection with other powerful American churches. Moreover, its Bishop and some of his advisors circulated right-wing ideas in the Episcopate's publications and raised the criticism of American media and religious organizations.

The American journalists acknowledged that the loss of Bessarabia, and especially of Transylvania, led ultimately to the fall of King Carol. Time asserted that, after the loss of the province, "many of his subjects saw Carol as an arch-traitor, or as an arch-fool who relied upon the guarantee of Great Britain to save Rumania."⁵⁹ Nevertheless, they also understood that King Carol had been the last chance of Romania to bargain with Germany and not capitulate to Nazi pressure.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ According to the 1930 U.S. Census, there were over 274,450 Hungarians in the United States (0.21 percent), unlike Romanians who were only 146,393 (0.11 percent of the total population). U. S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the U.S.: 1930. Population. Volume II (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), p. 268.

⁵⁹ Time, September 16, 1940, p. 34.

⁶⁰ "Carol was a vain, autocratic, and often irresponsible monarch. But," wrote The Nation, "in the last few years he had struggled manfully to prevent his country from falling under Nazi domination.... King Carol's headlong flight ... marked the formal end of independent Romania." The Nation, September 14, 1940, p. 201.

The press did not succeed in totally annihilating the American people's interest about Romania. The Romanian Ministry of Propaganda and the Romanian Legation in Washington continued to receive requests from private U.S. citizens for informative materials concerning Romania, its culture and history. For example, in 1937 high school student Betty Jean Olson from Seattle and Mrs. Victoria Stinos from Fresno, California, asked the Romanian Legation in Washington to send them information about Romania to be used in different local exhibitions.⁶¹ Also, Mrs. Pearl W. Metzethin requested a Romanian cookbook in order to display it at the New York World Fair of 1939.⁶² Outside the friendship societies, Romania had private friends in the United States in the late 1930s. In January 1938, George Berchek, President of "The American Society for Improved International Relations" from St. Louis, Missouri, offered his contribution to the development of Romanian-American relations.⁶³ Romania began to be perceived as part of Europe by American organizations. For example, in April 1937, Kenneth Holland, the Vice-President of the Commission of American Youth, affiliated with the "American Council on Education," put together a brochure about youth camps in Europe. He asked the Romanian Ministry of Propaganda to send him information about this subject in Romania to be included in the pamphlet.⁶⁴

The American public had little contact with Romanian traditions and culture. The New York World Fair of 1939 was one of Romania's rare opportunity to familiarize

⁶¹ State Archives, Bucharest, File 1945, Propaganda, Page 19.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Page 166.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Page 148.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Page 19.

Americans with its national achievements. The Romanian exhibition opened in May 1939 and included a clever and attractive combination of the country's rich past, developing present, and promising future. Two buildings contained the presentation: the official pavilion, designed by George Cantacuzino, and the Romanian House, built by architect Octav Doicescu. Americans willing to get the feeling of Romanian culture could watch the costume and folk dance parades, exhibits of rugs, wood carvings, and ceramics. Those interested in the Romanian cuisine could visit the Romanian House which housed a restaurant with drinks and food prepared by famous chefs from Bucharest.⁶⁵ The opening of the Romanian pavilion in New York at the World Fair became an occasion to express mutual hopes for the future of peace and understanding in the world. New York's Mayor La Guardia encouraged the Romanians "to play their historic role in Europe and 'resist the barbarians.'"⁶⁶ In the context of the spring of 1939, his message became almost an official request for Romanian resistance to the German pressure.

In the late 1930s, American media closely followed the internal and international situation of Romania. They made a point of stressing the importance of its natural resources for Germany's successful pursuit of war. Journalists also emphasized the delicate geographical and political position of Romania in the Balkans. Due to its location at the Danube's exit into the Black Sea, it possessed the strategic key to Germany's drive toward the Bosphorus, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Politically,

⁶⁵ Vasile Hategan, "The Romanians of New York," Part II, Romanian-American Heritage Center Information Bulletin 4 (July-August 1992): 24.

⁶⁶ New York Times, May 6, 1939, 7.

Romania was squeezed between Germany and the Soviet Union and placed in the position of having to choose the protection of one or the other.

The American media was of the opinion that King Carol's personal dictatorship was the most logical solution to preserving the independence of the country and of containing the internal right-wing danger. Some of the foreign correspondents of this period supported King Carol's efforts to transform Romania into a prosperous and modern country.⁶⁷ The press praised Carol's efforts to maintain a balance between his natural inclination toward the Western European democracies--France and Britain--and his forced friendship with Germany.

At the same time, the U.S. press and public organizations expressed their discontent with Romania's treatment of minorities and pressured the American government to intervene for the improvement of human rights in Romania. The State Department kept a cautious attitude toward this precarious issue and considered it exclusively a Romanian problem. Nevertheless, unfavorable articles in the American press negatively affected the image of Romania in the United States. The American public had little occasion, with the exception of the New York World Fair of 1939, to come in

⁶⁷ For more information see Ernest H. Latham, Jr., "Ziaristi englezi si americani la Bucuresti, intre anii 1938-1941" (British and American Journalists in Bucharest, 1938-1941), Magazin Istoric (Historical Magazine) 10 (October 1994): 15-20. Some of the most important titles are: Derek Patmore, Invitation to Romania (London: Macmillan & Co., 1939) and Balkan Correspondent (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941); Robert Parker, Headquarters Budapest (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1944); Leland Stowe, No Other Road to Freedom (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1942); R.G. Waldeck, Athenee Palace (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1942); Robert St. John, Foreign Correspondent (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1957); Cedric Salter, Flight from Poland (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1940).

contact with the culture of Romania. Therefore, in the late 1930s, Romania still remained poorly known in the United States and was often recognized only through sometimes biased view of the press.

No official U.S. documents attested to the idea that American press was partly responsible for the State Department's cautious policy regarding Romania. For example, although U.S. publications conducted a vigorous and vocal campaign against Romania's treatment of minorities, the American government maintained a diplomatic distance from this Romanian internal problem. At the same time, U.S. officials were not impressed by the worries of the press concerning the strategic importance of Romania, if helped by the United States and the Western European powers, in stopping the advancement of Germany in Eastern Europe. Therefore, from a theoretical point of view, the general negative press received by Romania in the interwar period and the lack of interest expressed by the most part of the American public may have played a part in shaping the American non-committal and non-involvement policy toward Romania.

Conclusion

The development of Romanian-American relations between 1938 and 1940 was burdened by a series of issues. In order to understand the coordinates on which evolved the relationship between the two countries, one is obliged to consider both the American perception of Eastern Europe and the asymmetry between the interests of Romania and the United States.

The relationship between Romania and the United States in the late 1930s has to be seen in the larger context of the relationship of the East Central European states to the New World. The United States was a great power whose interests were worldwide but it chose to impose limitations on its diplomacy. In the period between the two world wars and immediately afterwards, East Central Europe was regarded as too remote a region to awaken the interest of American diplomacy. The U.S. perception of the economical, political, and cultural representation of this region did not see it as a working reality.¹ Therefore, the foreign policy decision-makers of the State Department did not formulate a sound strategy toward East Central Europe in the interwar period. This area had little to offer to the United States strategically, economically, and politically. Some countries-- Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia--preoccupied American officials not necessarily because of their economic or strategic importance but for domestic electoral purposes. Moreover, the State Department regarded East Central Europe as part of France's and Great

¹ For more information, see Robert Ferrell, "The United States and East Central Europe Before 1941," in The Fate of East Central Europe: Hopes and Failures of American Foreign Policy, ed. by Steven Kestesz (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1956), pp. 21-51.

Britain's sphere of influence. The two European powers, especially France, had almost exclusive authority in Eastern Europe in the interwar period.

Germany's "Drang nach Osten" of the late 1930s, threatening the balance of power in Eastern Europe, went all but unnoticed by American diplomacy. However, Washington was forced to start to follow more closely the rapid developments in East Central Europe and the struggle for survival of this region's countries even though it took few concrete measures in 1939 and the first half of 1940 beyond repealing some parts of the 1937 Neutrality legislation. With some notable exceptions, the Americans still believed that political developments in this area did not affect the United States in any way. As historian Robert Ferrell observed, "the policy of political unconcern continued until 1940, by which time the entire area had been virtually partitioned by Germany, Russia, and Italy."² The insignificant American interests in Eastern Europe would not require the use of American military force to stop the advancement of Germany or later, the Soviet Union. Therefore, the general Eastern European perception that the United States deserted the region at the Yalta conference may be said to be based on the false premise of American interest. The American position at Yalta was consistent with the U.S. policy of marginalizing this region during the interwar period and immediately after World War II.

When thinking about Romanian-American relations, one must also keep in mind the nature of a big power-small power relationship. With minor exceptions, neither the United States nor Romania had important economic and political interest in the other. During the interwar period, the relationship between Romania and the United States was

² Ibid., p. 48.

characterized by a fundamental and growing asymmetry of both material and political resources. Exports from Romania like lambskin or sugar beets did not arouse particular interest on the American market which could import these rather insignificant items more cheaply from closer places, like Latin America. On the other hand, the United States offered to Romania primarily manufactured products such as machinery and automobiles which Romanians could not afford to buy in large quantities. According to Sumner Welles, the U.S. Undersecretary of State in the late 1930s, "Even had the United States adopted a positive policy designed to check the growth of Nazi domination in Europe, it would have had little to offer to the Balkan governments to offset the economic arrangements proposed by Germany."³ Also, Romania and the United States shared no particular common political interests except a general desire for peace and economic cooperation in the world.

In the late 1930s, Romania confronted problems of economic development, such as restructuring the economy--developing a powerful local manufacturing industry--, building up monetary reserves, and diversifying exports. Romanian officials' attempts to solve these problems, especially those related to national defense, involved negotiations for capital assistance translated in bilateral governmental and private loans and investments, as well as clearing and barter agreements.

King Carol II used as bargaining power Romania's economic and military weakness as well as its strategic location. He tried to persuade Great Britain, France, and eventually the United States, to help strengthen the country's defense capabilities in order

³Welles, p. 253.

to achieve Romania's primary foreign policy main goal of maintaining the territorial "status-quo." Romanian officials oriented their efforts toward American armament manufacturers in order to build up Romania's defense after September 1939. This initiative in Romania's arms' imports constituted a new and original departure from previous decades. Because the traditional armament contractors--Czechoslovakia, Great Britain and France--had their own needs to satisfy, Romania requested American help. Unfortunately, Romania's meager hard currency reserves forced Romanian officials to ask for credits or loans. American banks and private manufacturers were dubious about Romania's payment abilities due to its poor record of loan repayment after World War I. Therefore, King Carol II's plans to supply Romania's arsenals with American material failed. In the summer of 1940, lacking a market for Romanian exports and the effective means to protect the country, the King moved toward Germany in the hope of obtaining armaments in exchange for oil and grain. The goal of Romanian foreign policy to maintain a balance between the country's natural affinities toward Western powers and its newly forced association with Germany ultimately failed. In the end, Romania did not have the necessary economic and military strength to resist the aggressive attempts of Germany to monopolize its natural and human resources.

The American journalists and diplomats active in the Balkans perceptively and regularly informed the State Department about Germany's aggressive policy toward the East Central European states. In this context, Romania emerged as a decisive pawn in the German march to the East. The American media and some American diplomats assigned

to European countries repeatedly emphasized that Romania's natural resources, such as oil and grains, were essential to Germany's continuing to prosecute a world war.

Even if Romania could have attracted the political and economical interest of the United States, it suffered during the entire interwar period from a poor public image. Its treatment of minorities, especially Jews and Hungarians, evoked strong criticism from the American media and public organizations. Ethnic groups in the United States lobbied intensely to influence the State Department to break off diplomatic relations with Romania if their complaints were not heeded in Bucharest. The Romanian immigrant population was too insignificant in number (only 147,000 in 1930) and too centered in specific areas-- Detroit, Cleveland--to have an influence on American national politics. Moreover, the majority of Romanian immigrants in the interwar period were blue collar workers, minimally educated and politically uncultured. In the late 1930s, Romania's image as an exotic, politically and ethnically troubled, and little known Balkan kingdom remained unchanged for the American public.

The United States did not have any great strategic, military, or economic interests in Romania at the time of Germany's rapid advance in the Balkans. Despite the warnings of the American press and diplomats, the State Department was content only to watch cautiously the events in East Central Europe and had no determined or active policy to prevent its falling into Germany's sphere of influence. The lack of a powerful lobby in Congress, the small number of immigrants compared to other Eastern European countries, the distance between Romania and the United States as well as the negative image

disseminated by the press contributed to the constant lack of interest of American diplomats and private businessmen toward Romania during 1938 and 1940.

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