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Romanian-French Contacts at the Level Of Military Decision-Makers

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Abstract. In 1932 and 1933 invitations to Generals Gamelin and Petin to visit Bucharest were declined on the basis of more or less objective reasons\(^1\), this was not the case from 1934 onwards, when the frequency of such French visits to Bucharest increased. There was also a clear change in the level of representation, culminating in the visits of Generals Pétin, Mittelhauser, Georges, Gamelin and Weygand. Another significant moment for the development of the French-Romanian military relations was the presence in Bucharest of General Victor Pétin. It took place in a different context from that of General Gouraud's arrival, with different dimensions and connotations. The consequences of the visits, based primarily on the growing convergence of French and Romanian interests at that time, were felt. On the 8\(^{th}\) of June, the Europe Sub-Directorate of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed the need to accept Romanian arms requests by means of a commitment to supply on credit and with annual instalments. One of the arguments put forward was that: 'As a faithful ally, Romania, like Yugoslavia, is part of the Small Alliance and the Balkan Alliance, whose policy tends to be in line with the direction of action decidedly favourable to the preservation of the established order, cannot but receive the approval of the Government of the Republic.

Keywords. Romanian army, visits, Generals France, military, Bessarabia

A comparative look at the reciprocal visits of important military personalities shows an increase in their rhythm, in the willingness of the French side to respond favourably to invitations from Romania. Thus, while in 1932 and 1933 invitations to Generals Gamelin and Petin to visit Bucharest were declined on the basis of more or less objective reasons\(^2\), this was not the case from 1934 onwards, when the frequency of such French visits to Bucharest increased. There was also a clear change in the level of representation, culminating in the visits of Generals Pétin, Mittelhauser, Georges, Gamelin and Weygand. The programmes of these visits, both on the French and Romanian sides, undergo permanent qualitative changes, demonstrating that less emphasis is placed on protocol in favour of a concrete, to-the-point approach to bilateral relations. The protocolary aspects, invitations to certain solemnities, have been the main pretext used for the presence in Romania of increasingly high-ranking French military representatives. All this was also a reflection of increasingly noticeable changes in the way France's policy was expressed on a general European level, with decision-makers,
especially military ones, increasingly accepting the idea that retreating behind fortifications could not ensure a certainty of security if it was not combined with an effective system of alliances. In addition, Romania had overcome the crisis in mid-1934, and the effects of the economic recovery were being felt in the attitude of the government towards the material and financial problems of the Romanian army. Prime Minister Gheorghe Tătărescu himself acknowledged this, saying in a conversation with General Mittelhauser during his visit to Bucharest in 1936: "Less than two years of patriotic concern". It was a clear expression of confidence in Romania's ability to provide the necessary means for progress in the field of armament and strengthening its security. Unfortunately, domestic and international developments contradicted him.

Visit of General Gouraud

The first important presence in Romania of a high French military official between 1930 and 1936 was that of General Gouraud, which took place between the 13th and 25th of June 1930. Arriving in Bucharest at the invitation of the Romanian government, General Gouraud set an extremely dense programme. The head of the Romanian Legation in Paris suggested, as early as the 18th of February 1930, in a telegram addressed to his boss in Bucharest, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mironescu, that it would be good if in the programme of the visit of the French guest were to give "special importance to the situation of the army and especially to receive the friendly advice of a competent personality, in order to improve our army in all respects and to let him see how it was equipped. At the same time, and in case General Gouraud, out of a sense of prudence, would not go to the new lands, he could bring to the parade, set on the 10th of May, some unit from the annexed provinces, including and especially from Basarabia". The arrival of the French guest was somewhat later than originally scheduled.

In the run-up to the visit, some of the General's and the French government's views were heard during the finalisation of the programme. They referred to the concern not to give this French presence in Romania a connotation that would upset the Soviet Union. In this respect, Diamandy reported from Paris to Bucharest on the 25th of May 1930 that, at a luncheon given by the General in honour of the Romanian Legation, he informed the General that he had taken note of the proposed programme, but that, as he was badly maimed by the war, would like it not to be so full and to have more time to rest, reducing the duration of his visit to Chișinău and Sinaia to only one day. "As far as Chișinău in particular is concerned, we should not forget the request expressed by the French government to avoid any kind of demonstration towards our eastern neighbours" - the Romanian official warned. On the 31st of May 1930, the Romanian Minister in Paris returned to this subject, bringing to the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest that "Briand has again asked that any debate be avoided which, due to bad faith alone, could be interpreted as directed against Russia. In this connection, Briand would like the visit to Basarabia to be reduced to a single day". The French insistence on this

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3 Alain Porchet, *La cas roumain...20 ans après*, in "La fin de la Première Guerre mondiale et la nouvelle architecture géopolitique européenne", under the direction of George Cipăianu - Vasile Vesa, Cluj, Presses Universitaires de Cluj, 2000, p. 350
4 A.M.A.E., France fonds, vol. 65 (unnumbered)
5 Ibidem
6 Ibidem
point was the obvious result of the concern of diplomats in Paris, who wanted a normalisation of relations with the Soviet Union.7

Upon arrival, the French general introduces himself to the King, visits the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and pays a visit to General Prezan. His visits also include the army's governing bodies, the Ministry of the Army and the General Staff. Accompanied by an official mission made up of dignitaries from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Army, General Gouraud lays a wreath at the Mausoleum of Marasesti, and then visits the battlefields around the site.8

Interested in the history of Romania, on the occasion of his arrival in the north of Moldavia, the French military official expressed his wish to be shown the monasteries in the area and the Fortress of Suceava.9 Apart from the protocolary aspects and getting to know Romania through the General's presence in Bucharest, Iasi, Chernivtsi, Sinaia, Brasov, Sibiu, the programme only included a visit to the Reșița Factories, Mines and Fields. Moreover, a significant stage of this tour through Romania was missing from the programme – Chișinău.10

General Paul Angelescu's mission to Paris

The difficult path of persuading France to accept the support so necessary to ensure the combat capability of the Romanian army was also marked by the mission of General Paul Angelescu, former Minister of the Army, occupying the post of Inspector General of the Army, at the end of 1931.11 His visit to the French capital was dedicated to the necessary interventions with General Weygand and other personalities in France, in order to build in the country gas (chemical products), explosives and powder factories, as well as to solve the question of the development of ammunition, establishing the necessary arrangements from a technical point of view, as well as to discuss the necessary financial conditions.

His approach to the personalities with whom he had contact was framed by a mandate based on three main ideas:

a) The Ministry of the Romanian Army asked the Ministry of the French Army for the necessary technical help - the result of its experiences during the years after the Great War - for the creation of various factories in the country, as well as for the operation of ammunition rebuilding.

Technical aid was understood in the sense of providing various data and procedures used in the French war industry and sending experienced specialists from the French army to train the Romanians, both in the construction of factories and in their operation.

b) As far as the financial support from France was concerned, it was intended to be granted taking into account Romania's precarious financial situation, which did not allow for too great annual efforts, especially during the financial year 1932-1933. This support was not to exclude the technical assistance offered by the French army, nor the possibility of using it for orders from the military factories in the country, which would allow the creation of a complete and harmonious system, so that in the future the Romanian army could count on an industry capable of satisfying all its armament needs in the event of war.

8 Romanian Military Archives (hereafter A.M.R.), War Ministry fonds, General Secretariat, file no. 1009, f. 84.
9 Ibidem, f. 81
10 Ibidem, f. 81-84
11 Ibidem, file no. 1186, 5-16 (see also National Archives of Romania, Royal Household fonds. Officials, King Charles II, Cabinet, file no. crt. 50/1933)
Throughout the mission, the Romanian dignitary was assisted by his military attaché, General Petre Dumitrescu, with whom he consulted on the people in the French army leadership he should meet.

The first meeting was with Blanchard, Director General of Powder at the Ministry of War. The first issue discussed was the special powder needed to load the 13 mm "Hotchiss" machine gun ammunition, the manufacture of which is kept a secret by the French Army Ministry.

The senior French official agreed to give the Romanian military the specifications and data on the manufacture of the powder, as well as the necessary details, on condition that the Romanian government ensures that the manufacturing technology will remain secret.

As to the request for support for the creation of a trotyl and powder factory, technical support has been promised, again on one condition: it must be carried out by a French company. To coordinate the ammunition rebuilding operation, it was promised to send an experienced engineer and several foremen to Bucharest to start the operation in safe conditions.

The second meeting was with General Maurin, Inspector General of the Artillery, during which the possibility of setting up a gas factory and producing gas masks with French support was discussed. It was promised to send a chemist who had worked in French army laboratories. And in connection with the second request, it was promised to provide the necessary data and technical support for the manufacture of masks in the country.

General Weygand, Vice-Chairman of the High War Council and Inspector General of the Army, with whom the Romanian emissary had his third meeting, explained the basic views mentioned at the beginning of his report. The Romanian General expressed his conviction that he was addressing "the first representative of the French Army, one who understands that the Romanian Army is a main support of the Allies - at the head of which is France - against all attempts to change the present state of affairs enshrined in the Versailles Peace; to one who realizes that the Romanian army, in the event of aggression by the Soviet Union, represents the general strategic vanguard of the Allies and, finally, to one who, in view of all these considerations, must - in the interest of France itself - do everything possible to ensure that, in the event of war, the Romanian army will be able to satisfy its needs for armaments of all kinds in the country itself.

This is in fact, the main advice that Marshal Foch gave us, in the presence of his lordship, on his arrival in the country, on the occasion of the coronation of H.M. King Ferdinand".

General Weygand replied that he was in complete agreement and that he understood that he had to do his best to meet all the demands, pointing out that while he could technically commit himself, he was not qualified to answer the financial aspects. "I objected to him that I understood only too well that, from a strictly financial point of view, his lordship had no quality, but if we look at the question as a whole, it is of course in France's interest that we should be well armed, and, in this context, I have no doubt that the strong support which his lordship can give us through the French Government will be such as to facilitate this financial support.

Following these discussions, General Weygand promised that he would seek to give us his full support when the Romanian government will deal with the French government" - General Paul Angelescu wrote.

At the end of the meeting, General Weygand asked about the mood of the population of Bessarabia, as well as the general situation in the country, in the face of the financial crisis, and the answer was reassuring: the financial crisis is being borne with a lot of stoicism, and the
population of Bessarabia is made up mostly of Moldovans, i.e. it is Romanian and therefore completely peaceful.

"I have insisted on this question because I have had occasion to note that, sometimes, when asking for financial support from France for the completion of our armament, the great Soviet danger is brought up as a peremptory argument, which, of course, besides being exaggerated, is not encouraging for those who would be willing to make capital investments in our country".

The last meeting was with General Gamelin, Chief of the French General Staff, which was attended by General Petre Dumitrescu, as all the others. Gamelin also declined competence for financial matters, which were - he said - the responsibility of the government, but he promised to use all his influence and all his conviction with Maginot - the Minister of War - to solve these problems.

General Angelescu insisted this time also on the financial problems "because, without being told, indirectly, I however felt from the various meetings I had, that the bitterness persists, that when the stabilization loan was made, the amounts intended for arms investments were given through various orders to other states and, because on leaving the country, in a conversation I had with the French military attaché, he drew my attention to the fact that an installment due - if I am not mistaken - to the "Creusot" factories was deferred.

I said to General Gamelin that, whatever people may say, Romania has always paid its debts, even a little late, given the financial crisis, which is, moreover, general.

He insisted that we make every effort to complete the armament and I found the opportunity to reply that this depends largely on the technical and financial support that France will give us, support that is ultimately in its own interest".

The conclusion that emerged at the end of the mission was that, while technical support was assured, in financial matters the availability of the French military authorities' assistance should be used to secure and facilitate arrangements.

**General Victor Pétin's secret mission to Bucharest**

Another significant moment for the development of the French-Romanian military relations was the presence in Bucharest of General Victor Pétin. It took place in a different context from that of General Gouraud's arrival, with different dimensions and connotations. After Hitler's accession to the German leadership in January 1933, Berlin sought to ensure an increasingly consistent presence in Eastern Europe. The main objective of this new orientation was to regain the status it had before the First World War. Romania was part of the German sphere of interests, and its strategy of political and economic subordination aimed at "breaking up the alliance system, stimulating the revisionist claims of some neighbours, economic pressure, training domestic political forces, conducting skilful propaganda, etc." As early as 1926, the German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann had been advocating the provision of German economic markets for Romania and Yugoslavia. He saw in this the possibility of weakening the French security system in Eastern Europe and creating gaps between the states of the Little Entente. The idea would be taken up by the German Foreign Ministry even during the 1929-1933 crisis. A trade agreement was signed with Romania in 1930 and a preferential

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treaty in 1931, and in 1934 Germany signed trade treaties with Hungary and Yugoslavia to open up the German market for the agricultural products of the two countries at fixed prices. In parallel, Rosenberg sought to destructure the regional alliance of which Romania was a part and to undermine the French presence in the area by also co-interesting Romania. In 1935 he offered Carol II the possibility of concluding a German-Romanian friendship treaty, which provided for "German recognition of the Romanian borders, together with a large-scale commercial treaty," on condition that Romania remained outside any combination directed against the Third Reich. The initiative was not completed, not only because of the opposition of Nicolae Titulescu and the pro-French movement, but also because Carol himself was reluctant to take such a decision. On October the 7th 1936, he informed Fabricius, the head of the German Legation in Bucharest, that he was not "a sympathiser of Bolshevism" and that his wish was "to direct my country's policy towards closer friendly relations with Germany. But... Romania's policy is one of treaties with France, Poland, and the Little Entente... If Germany succeeds in having better relations with France... it will be possible for me to be more open".

Previously, France had shown a clear disinterest in deepening cooperation with its allies in Central and Eastern Europe, with the states of the Little Entente, implicitly with Romania. For this reason, the necessary regular meetings of the leading factors in the mobilisation of forces had not been organised, no operational plans had been drawn up specifying the modalities of a joint response in the event of a conflict, whether partial or generalised, the size of the forces with which each partner was to participate in the military action or the command relations had not been specified, nor had the means of liaison been clearly established. This attitude was explained by the Romanian minister in Paris in 1926 by l'esprit du temps, by the hostility of French public opinion towards the military and militarism, materialised in "the fact that military leaders - he was thinking of Marshals Foch and Joffre or General Weygand - who have contributed to the defence and victory of France, now play almost no part in the unfolding of events, are not used and their voice, even if it is heard, is no longer listened to by anyone." This explanation, incomplete, we believe, was no longer valid in 1934, when the European order established at Versailles in 1919 was increasingly threatened by Germany. France's diplomacy, in line with its own perceived interests, had not acted to strengthen ties with its Eastern European allies, and even tended to blame them for the situation that had arisen.

The government in Bucharest was also aware of the need to take measures to strengthen defence capabilities. In February 1934, in the context of the European politico-military situation, the General Staff drew up an analysis of the fighting condition and combat capability of the Romanian army, proposing to the Superior Council of National Defence that urgent measures be taken to make it capable of responding adequately to the new challenges that were looming. In his report, the head of the General Staff, considered that "the ever more accentuated clashes between the interests of the various nations bring closer the prospect of huge conflicts and it is necessary to examine to what extent we can face them. This examination

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must be all the more severe in view of the fact that, although Romania is pursuing an entirely peaceful policy, prohibiting any aggressive aims, large parts of its territory are, nevertheless, the subject of increasingly clearly defined claims. Receiving the alarm signal, Prime Minister Gheorghe Tătărescu reconfirms it and submits the General Staff proposals to the debate of the Superior Council of National Defence on the 12th of March. According to the minutes of that meeting - he declared that he "considers the external situation as very serious and, without being alarmist, believes that our armament must be the concern of any politician aware of his responsibility. The political situation - said the head of the Romanian government - leads us to believe that preventive mobilisation must be taken seriously. He does not see a general conflagration as an immediate possibility. The specialists and experts we spoke to see this conflagration as being more distant (2 years), whereas a preventive mobilisation may have to take place from one day to the next. The quick solution to modernise the Romanian army in order to meet the new requirements of the battlefield was, in the Romanian Prime Minister's view, to use the country's resources and French aid, which took the form of: "a) Gratuity. With the person summoned (General Pétin n.n.) and with the qualified representatives of the French government we will see to what extent they respond to our appeal. When we contribute with blood, they are obliged to contribute with military aid; b) What can be given by way of loan, from what they have in deposits, and after use for the known purpose, we will return it; c) What cannot be given, on long credit and at a reduced price. At the same time, he advocated the immediate conclusion of a military agreement between France and the Little Entente.

As a result, between the 3rd and the 8th of April 1934, General Victor Pétin went on a secret mission to Bucharest at the request of Carol II and Gh. Tătărescu. The latter had been persuaded by Ion Antonescu, the head of the Romanian General Staff, to invite his French colleague from the Operations Section of the Romanian Grand Headquarters during the Great War. The aim: to discuss closer cooperation based on the provision of manpower by the Romanian side and armaments by the French.

That the initiative for Pétin's presence in Romania came from the leadership in Bucharest is demonstrated by two reports sent by d'Ormesson, the French Minister here, dated 19th and 23rd March 1934. He informed the Quai d'Orsay that on the 18th of March he had been invited by the King to a luncheon attended only by his wife and the Romanian government's Labour Minister and his wife. After coffee, the sovereign invited him to his cabinet for "political discussions". "He spoke to me about General Pétin's trip," d'Ormesson reported, "developing the same arguments he had told the military attaché, and he also paid me high praise. I replied that General Petin would come to Bucharest as soon as possible, making a reservation about the date, justified by the comment that he risked meeting the staff officers of the Little Entente. The King told me that he did not see any inconvenience on his part, but that he understood very well why the French Government preferred to avoid a meeting which was not wanted by the others. I replied that, if there was to be a delay, it would certainly only be for a few days.

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20 A.M.R., M.St.M. fund, Section III Operations, file no. 1397, f. 49
21 Idem, M.St.M. fund, Section I Mobilization Organization, file no. crt. 62, f. 1
22 Ibidem, f. 14
23 Ioan Talpeș, Diplomacy and Defence. Coordinates of Romanian Foreign Policy. 1933-1939, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1988, p. 89-90

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The King told me again what he had told me at his last invitation, to let me know that Romania absolutely needs France's help and that in the military field he intends to have very interesting conversations with General Pétin.

He told me that he was personally dealing with the arms issue, considering that two ministries had been dealing with it in his country for four years; it had to be dealt with and that from now on he would deal with it.

From a financial point of view, he told me that whatever the outcome of the experts' reports, Romania was unable to pay and that he could not consider paying the loans, as he had no means of providing for the internal needs of his kingdom.25

A few days later, the French military attaché informed the King of the date of General Pétin's arrival. At d'Ormesson's request, he asked the sovereign if the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister were aware of this personal invitation. The answer was affirmative only for Gh. Tătărescu. It was agreed that the French Minister in Bucharest would personally inform Tătărescu of the date of the Paris emissary's arrival, which took place on the 2nd of March, and that they would reach an agreement regarding Titulescu. On receiving the news of Victor Pétin's arrival, Tătărescu also stated that he had high hopes for the national defence projects in which he was personally interested. As for Titulescu, the Prime Minister informing him of the visit found that he received the news as the most natural thing in the world.26 Accepting the visit was a favourable response to repeated invitations that had been made the previous year, but which Petin had declined, of course at the suggestion of his bosses, under various pretexts.27

During his stay in Bucharest, the French general had several conversations with Carol II, Gheorghe Tătărescu, Nicolae Titulescu and Ion Antonescu. During these talks, they discussed issues concerning the rapid coordination of military actions that were likely to be carried out jointly if Germany carried out the Anschluss or against Hungary if it violated the peace treaties.28 At the same time, the Paris emissary was informed of the contents of the Additional Protocol adopted at the Bucharest conference of the Chiefs of Staff of the armies of the states of the Little Entente in March. It had been drafted and proposed by Ion Antonescu and was intended to clarify certain ambiguities concerning the timing of the application and implementation of the provisions of the alliance by the three allied armies. At the same time, the importance of these clarifications for the probable military collaboration between France and the Little Alliance in the event of a generalised conflict was stressed.29 Unquestionably, the most pressing issue for Romania was the equipping of its army and this was the main focus of the discussions held on this occasion.30 They ended with the promise of a solution to the Romanian requests, but on condition that a series of measures to modernise the armed forces, which the General Staff had already begun, were promoted.

Back in France, Victor Pétin briefed decision-makers on the situation in Romania and the wishes of Romanian leaders. He reported that both Antonescu and Carol II told him that the Romanian army was not able at that time to honour its commitments to the Allies and could not

25 Centre of the Diplomatic Archives in Nantes (France), Legation of Bucharest, Series A, file 35
26 Ibidem
27 Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France fonds, vol. 65
28 Ioan Talpeș, op.cit., p. 90
29 Ibidem, p. 91
30 Larry L. Watts, op. cit. p. 95
break the deadlock by its own efforts alone, as it could not produce the necessary war material\textsuperscript{31}. The French government envoy also points to the precarious collaboration between the major states of the Little Entente on the one hand and the French General Staff on the other. "We are all aware of the precariousness of the collaboration between our General Staff and those of the Little Entente. This is clear from the fact that it (the precariousness of the collaboration) is within the framework of secret treaties and protocols. To speak only of Romania, the secret protocol of 1926 stipulates that this collaboration between the major states will not take place until an imminent conflict, i.e. too late. We are determined, from a military point of view, to break this deadlock, and it was agreed that this trip of mine... might provide the most happy opportunity for conventions of this kind"\textsuperscript{32}. In other words, he was proposing the signing of acts specifying the concrete parameters of military collaboration, preparing in advance and providing the means for such collaboration between the Allies.

At the end of his report, which is in fact a summary of the results of the mission to Bucharest, Victor Pétin noted that it focused on two major aspects:

- On the one hand, the purely Romanian aspect, which is ultimately reduced to the presentation of requests for material aid in arms.

- On the other hand, the French point of view, which consisted in us taking advantage of these particularly opportune circumstances to allow us to resume, with regards to the military matters of the Little Entente, a right of control which it would seem that we had willingly given up. As for the second part of my mission, I consider that it has succeeded under the best possible conditions. I found in General Antonescu an interlocutor of exceptional value; he opened to me his most hidden secrets, showed me documents bearing the most authentic signatures and revealed to me projects which corresponded in a particular way to the visions and wishes of the French command, as General Gamelin had explained them to me\textsuperscript{33}.

Submitted for information to Louis Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, the report provoked a significant reaction to confirm the existence of a difference of position between the military and political leadership, even though the French dignitary was known as a fervent supporter of the Little Entente. In his reply letter to the Chief of Staff of the Army, he expressed surprise at the position of the military staff, which proposed rewriting the text of the secret military protocol annexed to the Franco-Romanian treaty. It was drawn to the attention of the military that it was they who had proposed the wording of the protocol signed with Yugoslavia in 1927 and which had been renewed in 1932 without being modified, although it had the same wording as that signed with Romania in 1926. When this reconfirmation was carried out, "your Department," he complained, "considered that its wording did not require any additional clarification and that it would allow cooperation between the French and Yugoslav General Staffs to be ensured under satisfactory conditions. In fact, the Belgrade Government, like our General Staff, has never made it known to us that it considers the above-mentioned texts insufficient to ensure all useful technical contacts. Under these circumstances, it does not seem to me that it would be appropriately to modify the text of the Franco-Romanian protocol signed in 1926 by my predecessor\textsuperscript{34}. This was, of course, a deliberate omission of a comparison.

\textsuperscript{31} Jean Nouzille, *The military aspect of Franco-Romanian relations between 1919 and 1939*, in Romanian Journal of International Studies, year XXV, no.3-4 (113-114), May-August 1991, p. 201

\textsuperscript{32} Ibidem

\textsuperscript{33} Apud Jean Nouzille, *The military aspect of Franco-Romanian relations between 1919 and 1939*, in Romanian Journal of International Studies, year XXV, no.3-4 (113-114), May-August 1991, p. 201.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibidem, p 202
between the attitude of the two allies, Romania and Yugoslavia, towards France, which was increasingly evident in the next stage.

Regarding the confessions of the Romanian Chief of Staff, Ion Antonescu, to Pétin concerning the decision taken at the meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the armies of the Small Entente in Bucharest, in the spring of that year, concerning a retaliation of the Alliance states against Hungary in a crisis situation, without expecting a formal position from the latter, Barthou warned that such an action would not enjoy the support of France, since assistance would only be given under the terms of the treaties which provided only that they would be victimised and attacked, without provocation on their part\textsuperscript{35}

This attitude of intransigence towards the wording of diplomatic acts that no longer corresponded to reality was quickly modified during Louis Barthou's visit to Romania from the 21\textsuperscript{st} to the 23\textsuperscript{rd} of June 1934. This visit, which was also the result of insistence by the political and military decision-makers in Bucharest, was intended to be seen as a manifestation of the will of the two countries to act in order to deepen bilateral cooperation. On this occasion too, the Romanian Prime Minister expressed his concern about the increasingly dangerous developments in the general situation in Europe, which was becoming more and more threatening for the integrity of his country. The solution of defending it by force, although undesirable, was seriously affected by the lack of military material means, even with all the sufficient and quality human element. For this reason, he considered it absolutely necessary for France to supply as soon as possible essential weapons such as heavy artillery, light field artillery, with the necessary ammunition, and aviation to ensure the operational capability of at least 10-12 divisions. The beneficial effect for France was also reiterated, given the existence of a Romanian armed force capable of playing the role that Romania's ally "expects at the right time"\textsuperscript{36}. Louis Barthou made known the French government's appreciation of the value and importance of the Romanian army's intervention in the event of conflict, promising the necessary support for the effort to equip it\textsuperscript{37}. To this was added the unequivocal declaration on the guarantee of Romania's borders: "Peace has restored to you the borders that were yours. They will remain yours" - he said\textsuperscript{38}.

We do not know if these declarations were only formal, necessary to allay the anxiety felt by Romanians. What is certain is that France continued to march on the idea of tacit acceptance of the revanchist and revisionist claims, making concessions that it considered necessary to ensure its security. The reorientation towards Romania that occurred in April 1938 was late and was not useful even for itself.

However, it is not to be neglected, the minimal progress made as a result of these contacts on the way to equipping the Romanian army with French support. With the strong support of General Pétin and other senior military figures in the French army, these requests will receive favourable treatment.

The consequences of the two visits, based primarily on the growing convergence of French and Romanian interests at that time, were felt. On the 8\textsuperscript{th} of June, the Europe Sub-Directorate of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed the need to accept Romanian arms requests by means of a commitment to supply on credit and with annual instalments. One of the arguments put forward was that: 'As a faithful ally, Romania, like Yugoslavia, is part of

\textsuperscript{35} Ibidem
\textsuperscript{36} Ioan Talpeș, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 93
\textsuperscript{37} Ibidem
\textsuperscript{38} Ibidem
the Small Alliance and the Balkan Alliance, whose policy tends to be in line with the direction of action decidedly favourable to the preservation of the established order, cannot but receive the approval of the Government of the Republic. The time has perhaps come to assert our interest in the Romanian national defence and thus to encourage the friendship which we count on from this country and which has remained strong among the great majority of Romanians”

References

[1] A.M.R., War Ministry, Cabinet, file no. crt., f158. 67
[6] National Archives of Romania, Royal Household fonds. Officials, King Charles II, Cabine
[15] Centre of the Diplomatic Archives in Nantes (France), Legation of Bucharest, Series A, file 35
[16] Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France fonds, vol. 65

39 *Ibidem*, p. 91