NICOLAE TITULESCU'S NEW EASTERN POLICY AND THE UPGRADING OF ROMANIA'S DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH LITHUANIA

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Abstract:

In 1933 Nicolae Titulescu, widely regarded as the main driving force behind many of Romania's decisions in the field of foreign affairs for a decade and a half, started to ponder about the idea of opening a diplomatic representation of Romania in Kaunas. Reasons such as the necessity of advancing Romania and the Little Entente's interests in the area, the usefulness of gaining access to information about Soviet Union circulating in the area and the importance of the geopolitical location of Lithuania at the intersection of Soviet, German and Polish interests were offered by the Romanian envoy to Riga to convince Titulescu. Yet, only in late 1935 and early 1936 was the decision being implemented and Constantin Văllimărescu was appointed to represent his country in Lithuania's temporary capital. This paper analysis these new evolutions in the Romanian-Lithuanian relations and the reasons behind them and approaches the diplomatic relations between the two countries in mid-1930s.

Rezumat:

În 1933 Nicolae Titulescu, considerat deja de peste un deceniu și jumătate personalitatea care se afla în spatele multora dintre deciziile de politică externă ale României, a început să ia în calcul ideea deschiderii unei legații românești în Kaunas. Argumente precum necesitatea de a susține interesele României și ale Micii Înțelegeri în regiune, utilitatea de a obține informațiile despre Uniunea Sovietică ce circulau în regiune, precum și importanța așezării geopolitice a Lituaniei la intersecția intereselor sovietice, germane și poloneze au fost menționate de ministrul român la Riga, Mihail R. Sturdza, un viitor ministru de externe al țării sale, pentru a-l convinge pe Titulescu de fezabilitatea acestei

decizii. Totuși, de-abia la sfârșitul anului 1935 și începutul anului 1936, în contextul în care România traversa o perioadă dificilă în relațiile sale cu Polonia și se constituise gruparea franco-cehoslovaco-sovietică, la care Titulescu dorea să alăture și țara sa, a fost aplicată această decizie. Constantin Văllimărescu a fost primul diplomat român desemnat să-și reprezinte țara la Kaunas, capitala temporară a Lituaniei, iar numirea sa a fost un semnal clar că România avea de acum înainte intenția de a aborda politica sa în regiunea baltică și în funcție de interesele sale, și nu numai de cele poloneze, așa cum se întâmplase până în acel moment. Vasile Stoica îi va succeda lui Văllimărescu și noi pași, deși mărunți, au fost întreprinși în ceea ce privește dezvoltarea relațiilor dintre Lituania și România. Acest articol analizează aceste noi evoluții din relațiile româno-lituaniene și rațiunile din spatele acestor decizii, precum și relațiile diplomatice dintre cele două state la jumătatea anilor '30.

Keywords: Romania, Lithuania, Nicolae Titulescu, diplomatic relations, 1930s, Eastern policy

Writing in the aftermath of his dismissal from the position of Romanian foreign minister he held for four years (1932-1936) in what can be regarded more as a justificatory work than a testimony, Nicolae Titulescu placed a special emphases on the Romanian benefits resulting from the signing of the London Convention of July 3 and 4, 1933. In Titulescu's understanding, this achieved not only a more thoughtful and comprehensive definition of aggression and aggressor in the international relations¹, but made impossible to Soviet Union to forcefully annex Romania's eastern province of Bessarabia, opening the path to the signing of the Balkan Entente (decided in October and fully signed next year on February 9)² and the Romanian-Turkish Pact of Eternal Friendship (October

¹ Upon Soviet's entry in the League of Nation, Commissar Maxim Litvinov repeatedly insisted on the need of a League's document to encompass the definition of aggressor. The full text of the document and an assessment of the Russian understanding of the Convention, at Christi Scott Bartman, *Lawfare: use of the definition of aggressive war by the Soviet and Russian Federation governments* (Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2010), 36-40. Titulescu himself time and again referred to what he termed the need to legally organize peace, which he normally linked to anti-revisionism or to Briand-Kellogg Pact, i.e. in his conference delivered in the German Reich in May 1929 and at Cambridge University in November 1930, Nicolae Titulescu, *Pledoarii pentru pace*, ediție îngrijită de George G. Potra și Constantin I. Turcu (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996), 158-161, 257-258

² On the formation and aims of the Balkan Entente exists an impressive bibliography published from late 1960s, the majority of which appeared with the interest of Communist Romania to use the past in order to establish better relations with her Balkan neighbors, see the classical syntheses signed by Cristian Popișteanu, *România și Antanta Balcanică. Momente și semnificații de istorie diplomatică*, ediția a II-a (București: Editura Politică, 1971), especially 69-201 and Eliza Campus, *Înțelegerea Balcanică* (București: Editura Academiei, 1972). After 1989, the Romanian historiography produced a number of less-focused but fresh

17) and to the further improvement of Romania's already intimate relations with France and Czechoslovakia. Moreover, the accomplishment of this pact opened the Romanian-Soviet diplomatic relations and political dialogue and consolidated the two countries' interest in fulfilling the project of the Eastern Pact.³ Titulescu must have been particularly satisfied with Soviet foreign commissar of foreign relations Maxim Litvinov's declaration in the presence of Turkish foreign minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras: "I understand that by signing these declarations I offered you Bessarabia".⁴ He soon decided that Romania should establish bilateral relations with Soviet Union and even act as an intermediary between Moscow and Geneva and Moscow and Romania's allies. Thus, the year 1933 was a benchmark in Romania's foreign policy when the Little Entente was strengthened, the creation of the Balkan Entente was decided and the bases of a rapprochement with Moscow were set up. Where, however, in his perspective of multilateralism and collective and regional security was the place of Lithuania, a country situated less than a thousand km north from the Romanian border? How the Romanian-Lithuanian relations evolved during the latter part of 1930s in the complex international relations generated by the revisionist challenge to the Versailles order?

To answer these questions and understand the changes operated in this relation during Titulescu's mandate an overview of the relations between Romania and Lithuania will be achieved. An analysis of Romania's foreign policy concerning Soviet Union, France and Poland is also necessary in order to envisage how Titulescu's decisions in relation to Lithuania were affected, the more so as during the previous period always Bucharest's policy in this respect was subsumed to its relations with Warsaw. Finally, Romania's projects in respect to the Eastern Pact and other international developments in the multilateral diplomacy must be also considered.

The *longue durée* of the Romanian-Lithuanian relations was a byproduct of geography and history. During the Middle Ages at the heydays of the Lithuanian Duchy and eventually during the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth geography facilitated this relationship. The Lithuanian, and then the Polish-Lithuanian advance towards the Black Sea turned them into neighbors of Moldova Principality with common border

interpretations of this alliance, thus creating a more complex picture of the interests and aspirations of its members. New documents were also published.

³ Nicolae Titulescu, *Politica externă a României* (1937), ed. George G. Potra, Constantin I. Turcu and Ion M. Oprea (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994), 105-118.

⁴ Walter M. Bacon, *Nicolae Titulescu și politica externă a României. 1933-1934* (Iași: Institutul European, 1999), 100.

being established on the Dniester at Soroca, Orhei and Lăpușna.⁵ From Lithuanian perspective Moldova was an important political player on the commercial road linking the Baltic and the Black seas that was of such outstanding importance to the Lithuanian state.⁶ In the linear economic systems of the time, merchants and merchandises were exchanged between Orient, Geneva and the Baltic Sea crossing the Romanian lands territory. In Valahia, for instance, the merchants from Poland and Lithuania were required to pay customs only in the city of Târgoviște. As the Romanian historian P.P. Panaitescu has long since argued, a constant in the foreign policy of Poland and Lithuania was to keep in vassal relations the voievod of Moldova and the grand master of the Teutonic Order, the first holding the clue to the Black Sea and the second to the Baltic Sea trade roads.⁷ This was achieved by concluding treaties and agreements, by mixed marriages and by common fighting against their enemies in the logic of the Middle Ages. Important figures of Romanian past such as Alexander the Good (1400-1431) and Stephan the Great of Moldova (1457-1504) or Mircea the Old (1386-1417) of Valahia were involved in these political, commercial and cultural exchanges. Although with the raising stars of the Ottoman, Habsburg and Russian empires history turned aside the attention of Romanians and Lithuanians from each other for many centuries, this past will be eventually evoked in 1938 when the Romanian envoy Vasile Stoica held four conferences in Kaunas, which will be later recalled in this paper.

For about a century, the Bessarabians and the Lithuanians were co-nationals in the Russian Empire whose downfall together with the demise of the other empires and the creation of a new international order following the World War I recreated the frame for re-knotting the relations at state level between the two nations. Not incidentally, the Lithuanian struggle for independence inspired the Bessarabian drive towards unification with Romania in 1917-1918⁸, as, following the same pattern, a consequence of geography, will contribute to the Republic of Moldova's independence in 1991.⁹

⁵ Virgil Ciocîltan, "Raporturi moldo-lituaniene, 1420-1429", in *Românii în istoria universală*, ed. Gheorghe Buzatu, III/1 (Iași, 1988), 129-143.

⁶ Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian state, 1386-1795* (The University of Washington Press, 2001), 32-33.

⁷ P.P. Panaitescu, *Interpretări românești. Studii de istorie economică și socială* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994), 83-84.

⁸ Ștefan Ciobanu, *Unirea Basarabiei. Studiu și documente cu privire la mișcarea națională din Basarabia în anii 1917-1918* (Chișinău: Editura Universitas, 1993), 32.

⁹ Interview of the author with former Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, Vilnius, June 15, 2009.

The aspirations of Romanians and Lithuanians to self-determination and national unification have met in the United States when representatives of the two nations were co-founders of the Democratic Mid-European Union and co-signatories of the Declaration of Common Scopes of Mid-European Independent Nations. Vasile Stoica reached the position of First Vice-President of the Union where the Lithuanian National Council in America and Lithuania was represented by Dr. John Szlupas (Sliupas) and Th. Marus Narusevicius.¹⁰ The desire for a better world, for peace and democracy were inscribed in this declaration, but the nations situated in-between Germany and Soviet Russia were too weak and divided to be able to put them in practice. The Polish-Lithuanian dispute over the Vilna region and the capital city of Vilnius is a good example of this discord and of its dividing capacities in an area of mixed ethnicities, elective identities¹¹ and disputed histories.

In fact, the Vilna dispute affected also Romania's eastern foreign policy on a bilateral and regional scale. In terms of bilateral relations, due to the Romanian-Polish alliance of March 1921 it created a barrier in the relations with Lithuania.¹² For instance, in August 1923, when the Lithuanian envoy in Prague visited his Romanian counterpart, Dinu Hiott, handing him a letter requesting the setting up of diplomatic relations between the two countries, foreign minister I.G. Duca had to refer the request to Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu and to confess that only a few days before the Polish had demanded that Romania should not establish diplomatic relations with Lithuania.¹³ Although the envoy to Warsaw Alexandru Florescu had gained one year later the Polish acquiescence to Romania establishing diplomatic bonds with Lithuania¹⁴ and the

¹⁰ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [The Romanian National Archives] (hereafter, ANIC), folder Vasile Stoica, file I/137, 1-36.

¹¹ I use this term in the sense attributed by Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, "Elective Ethnicity: The Phenomenon of Chosen National Identity in the Modern Baltic World," in *The Baltic World as a Multicultural World: Sea, Region and Peoples*, ed. Marko Lehti (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts - Verlag, 2005), 155-163.

¹² On the Polish barrier to the development of the Romanian-Polish relations, see Florin Anghel, *Construirea sistemului "cordon sanitar". Relații româno-polone, 1919-1926*, second edition, (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2008), 176-186 and „Polish Influences on the Baltic Demarches of Romanian Diplomacy, 1920-1930”, *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 4 (1999): 83-94.

¹³ He persuaded the Polish authorities that a Romanian diplomatic presence in Kaunas will serve Polish interests insofar as Bucharest will try to detach Lithuania from Soviet Union and to bring it closer to Romania and its allies, Constantin Hiott's telegram no. 1324 of 25.08.1923, Arhivele Diplomatice ale Ministerului Afacerilor Externe [The Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry] (hereafter, AMAE), folder 71/1920-1944, Lithuania. Relations with other states, vol. 4, 251.

¹⁴ Alexandru Florescu's dispatch no. 3357 of 3.08.1924, *Ibid.*, 255-258.

Lithuanian Legation in Prague extended for a brief period of time its authority to cover also Romania on August 21¹⁵, a Romanian Legation to Lithuania was late to come into being and a diplomat to Kaunas was not appointed for more than a decade. An attempt to set up a Romanian legation to Lithuania failed to materialize in late summer and beginning autumn of 1924, the main reason being Bucharest's intention to accredit to Kaunas her envoy to Warsaw, which was wholly unacceptable, almost a blasphemy to Lithuania.¹⁶

The reasons are to be found, again, in the recurring worsening of the Polish-Lithuanian relations. In January 1927, for instance, the new scale of tension between Romania's ally and Lithuania raised the attention of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, especially after a report from the envoy to Warsaw, Alexandru Iacovaki, mentioned Marshal Pilsudski's unwavering desire to attack Lithuania. The prospect of war worried the Romanian Foreign Ministry, Iacovaki being instructed to remain in permanent contact with the French envoy to Warsaw.¹⁷ One week later Constantin Diamandy reassured from Paris his Foreign Ministry superiors that due to the demarches of the French, British and Italian governments in Kaunas and of the French government in Warsaw the tensions calmed down and the likelihood of war diminished.¹⁸

Already in his first mandate as foreign minister, Titulescu attempted to open a Romanian diplomatic channel with Lithuania perceived as a country with which because of geographic proximity Bucharest wanted to improve its relations.¹⁹ Already at the beginning of November Titulescu was urging the envoy to Paris to approach his Lithuanian counterpart with the proposal that Romania appointed its envoy to Warsaw, Carol Davilla, as envoy to Kaunas, too. Titulescu was aware that Lithuania had previously refused to grant the approval to any such scheme, but he trusted Davilla's abilities and assurances that an exception in case of Romania was achievable.²⁰ Although Estonia had

¹⁵ AMAE, folder 82, Lithuania, vol. 93, 1.

¹⁶ Foreign Minister I.G. Duca's telegram no. 44558 of 25.08.1924, AMAE folder 71/1920-1944, Lithuania. Relations with other states, vol. 4, 259; N.B. Cantacuzen's dispatch no. 1951/XIV to French Prime Minister Edouard Herriot, *Ibid.*, 260; AMAE, folder 82, Lithuania, vol. 93, 1.

¹⁷ Mitilineu's notes no. 738 of 6.01.1927, ANIC, folder Casa Regală, Mihai I, Regență. Probleme externe, file no. 22/1927, 75.

¹⁸ Constantin Diamandy's dispatch no. 8120 of 14.01.1927, *Ibid.*, 76-77.

¹⁹ Titulescu 1994, 224.

²⁰ Nicolae Titulescu's instructions no. 8876 of 3.11.1927, ANIC, folder Casa Regală, Mihai I, Regență. Probleme externe, file no. 22/1927, 64.

granted in late October the agreement for Davila to be posted to Tallinn²¹, too, Titulescu's hopes that Lithuania will act similarly will soon prove futile. Envoy Petras Klimas, one of the twenty signatories of the Act of Independence of Lithuania, turned down the request on the ground that whether accepted it will create a precedent in his country's relations with other states.²² One month later Klimas produced a memorandum for the Romanian Legation restating Lithuanian's policy with regard to Poland and accusing this country for violating its territorial integrity.²³ Even when a Romanian Legation was created in Riga according to the decisions adopted in late December to cover the eastern Baltic and Mihail R. Sturdza was appointed in May 1929 to head it as charge d'affaires²⁴, no progress was achieved in integrating Lithuania in the Romanian system of diplomatic representation.

Eventually, on March 28, 1931 a trade agreement between the two states was signed in Berlin containing the clause of most favored nation, which was the first document concluded between the two states.²⁵ Yet, the exchanges remained negligible and the agreement had little if any consequences.

Soon after Titulescu's second appointment at the head of Romania's Foreign Ministry, the issue of appointing an envoy to Kaunas resurfaced. The envoy to Riga, Prince Studza, was prompting a decision in this matter already for some time by arguing that following Hitler's accession to power and the shift of political interest to the West a Romanian diplomatic representation to Kaunas would be welcomed.²⁶ This report followed other suggestions from Sturdza of June 17, 1931, February 26 and 27, 1933, asking for the extension of Riga Legation's powers to Kaunas on the ground that the absence from Lithuania was affecting Romania's capacity to gain valuable information serving itself and its allies' interests and anticipating that important political developments were going to take place in Kaunas.²⁷

²¹ Carol (Citta) Davila's dispatch no. 4389 of 25.10.1927 to Titulescu, in *Nicolae Titulescu. Opera politico-diplomatică, iulie 1927 – iulie 1928*, Partea I, volum îngrijit de George G. Potra and Costică Prodan (București: Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2003), 246.

²² Constantin Diamandy's dispatch no. 9009 of 25.11.1927, ANIC, folder Casa Regală, Mihai I, Regență. Probleme externe, file no. 22/1927, 65.

²³ Constantin Diamandy's dispatch no. 9066 of 6.12.1927, *Ibid.*, 66-68.

²⁴ Silviu Miloiu, *România și Țările Baltice în perioada interbelică* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2003), 81-82.

²⁵ Ion Calafeteanu, coord., *Istoria politicii externe românești în date* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), 267.

²⁶ Mihail Sturdza's dispatch no. 82 of 26.02.1933, AMAE, folder Latvia, 1933-1940, vol. 7, 120-121.

²⁷ Foreign Ministry's report on Romania's diplomatic relations with Lithuania and the accrediting of Bucharest's envoy to the Baltic States to Kaunas, *Ibid.*, 262.

Titulescu himself showed a renewed interest into opening a legation in Kaunas, the more so, as he was informed, Czechoslovakia had already been present there for five years and even Yugoslavia had appointed an envoy in 1933.²⁸ The subsiding of the Great Depression may have also positively contributed to the readjustment of Romanian foreign policy priorities in the Baltic area.

Gradually, Titulescu's foreign policy acknowledged a change especially as a consequence of the threat he perceived coming from Germany's revisionist program in the aftermath of the failure of the disarmament conference. The Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact of January 1934 and the steady improvement in the French-Czechoslovak-Soviet relations in 1934-1935 further changed the environment in which Romania's foreign policy was pursued. Titulescu was also afraid that things might change in the Soviet foreign policy and he wanted to prevent the possibility of a German-Soviet rapprochement on the Rapallo pattern on the expense of Romania and its allies. Although badly striving to keep the relationship with Poland and Germany on a good track, by 1935 he chose to close ranks with the French-Czechoslovak-Soviet constellation of powers which had the merit of maintaining the Romanian foreign policy in line with Paris and supporting the collective security program which was the basis of his country's foreign policy.²⁹ Additionally, Romania was interested in the project of the Eastern Pact that was anathema to Poland.³⁰

By spring 1935, rumors started circulating in the press and in the political circles about an agreement on military assistance between Romania and the Soviet Union according to which the Russian troops were given the right to use the Romanian territory. The rumors were not baseless and this naturally affected the Romanian-Polish relations. For this and other reasons, the gap between Bucharest and Warsaw was widening. Victor Cădere, Romania's envoy to Warsaw, who professed criticism of the conversations between Romania and Soviet Union, was, contrary to his wishes, transferred and posted to Southern America. According to Finnish diplomatic sources, strongly influenced by opinions circulating in Warsaw, in criticizing Titulescu, Cădere adopted a similar position with that of the Polish Government that was opposed to the eastern pact on the ground that it would open the Russian troops the possibility to use the Polish territory for meeting the forces of the enemy. Cădere considered that

²⁸ Ibid., folder Lithuania, 1927-1939, vol 4, 261.

²⁹ Emilian Bold and Ion Ciupercă, *Europa în derivă (1918-1940). Din istoria relațiilor internaționale* (Iași: Casa Editorială Demiurg, 2001), 138+139.

³⁰ Magnus Ilmjärv, "Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania And The Eastern Pact Project", *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 10 (2006), 72.

Polish refusal of the scheme made the treaties between France, Czechoslovakia and the USSR pointless unless Romanian accepted the passage of Romanian troops on her territory.³¹ Nevertheless, new signs of the rapprochement reached in the Romanian-Soviet relations came on October 19 with the opening of the traffic between Tighina and Tiraspol over the Dniester that had been interrupted for the past decade and a half.³²

In Nazi Germany, Titulescu's new eastern policy, at least according to the experienced Finnish envoy to Berlin, Aarne Wuorimaa, who had interviewed in this respect a high official in the German Foreign Ministry, Dr. Gerhard Köpke, was interpreted as an attempt to find the proper way in advancing the Romanian-Soviet relations and in keeping unified the Little Entente in the aftermath of the French-Soviet-Czechoslovakian treaties. Germany, whose foreign policy still bore the mark of the old diplomatic school³³, seems to have been at the time tranquil with regard to the Romanian-Soviet relations. The Auswärtiges Amt had received assurances from the Romanian envoy to Berlin Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen on behalf of Nicolae Titulescu that the claims regarding Romania's intention to grant the Red Army the passing rights through Romania and to conclude a defense treaty with Soviet Union were unsubstantiated. Nevertheless, in the short interview of Petrescu-Comnen with Wuorimaa, the former was not as convinced that an agreement between Romania and Soviet Union was unattainable.³⁴

The Romanian-Polish strong disagreements over Romania's policy towards Soviet Union had continued to turn apart the two states of each other and to affect the relations between the Polish envoy Arciszewski and Titulescu. The Romanian foreign minister repeatedly accused the Polish envoy of working against his line of foreign policy. During a very tense conversation reported by the Finnish envoy to Bucharest Idman, Titulescu

³¹ K.G. Idman's dispatch no. 7 of 24.10.1935, Ulkoasiainministeriön arkisto [The Finnish Foreign Ministry Archives] (hereafter, UA), folder 7 E Romania.

³² K.G. Idman's dispatch no. 9 din 23.10.1935, folder UA 5, microfilm C 14.

³³ See in this respect Köpke's testimony to the Nüremberg German Major War Criminals where he described foreign minister Konstantin von Neurath as close to conservative circles, "prudent, moderate, reliable", exercising a "moderating and calming influence on the Party", The Nizkor Project, "Dr. Gerhard Köpke's testimony to the Nüremberg German Major War Criminals, One Hundred and Sixty-Fourth Day: Wednesday, 26 June, 1946". 1991-2009., <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/imt/tgmwc/tgmwc-17/tgmwc-17-164-05.shtml>, 217 (accessed June 20, 2010).

³⁴ Aarne Wuorimaa's dispatch no. 49 of 26.10.1935, UA, folder 7 E Romania. The best monograph on the Romanian-German relations in this period that explains the turnabouts of Titulescu's approach to Germany is signed by Ioan Chiper, *România și Germania nazistă. Relații româno-germane între comandamentele politice și interese economice (ianuarie 1933 - martie 1938)* (București: Editura Elion, 2000).

let his guest know that he hoped to make an agreement with Soviet Union and thus adhere to France and Britain's European policies and pointed out to Romania's right to pursue the foreign policy it considered appropriate. Arciszewski threatened the Romanian chief of diplomacy in the name of the Polish General Staff that the outcome of such an agreement would be that Poland might change its strategic policy. An unwilling witness to this harsh exchange of views that seemed to destroy the basis of the Romanian-Polish alliance, Idman could talk to Titulescu after his Polish colleague left. Titulescu explained the Finnish envoy that the Pact of the League of Nations did oblige Romania to take such an action. If Titulescu found in Idman a more relaxed interlocutor, he did not find a mate soul however. Idman noticed that Titulescu's views were not supported by the latest developments, such as the war between Italy and Abyssinia. Once more, Titulescu stressed his intention of avoiding his country being drawn in a war.³⁵

Thus, between what was regarded as the Polish-German and the French-Czechoslovakian-Soviet foreign policy lines, Titulescu chose regardless the strong criticism coming from Warsaw, Berlin and Rome and from the Romanian right and central right politicians to follow in the footsteps of the French foreign policy.

This is where our logical hypothesis is to be introduced. It seems that with Titulescu and his collaborators being less willing to take into consideration the Polish point of view in relation to Lithuania, now Romania moved finally faster in the direction of establishing diplomatic relations with Lithuania. Naturally, this was not only the outcome of the tensions existing in the Polish-Romanian relations, but also of the desire to get a wider view of the developments in eastern Baltic and of Titulescu's understanding that expenses should not be spared when foreign policy is at stake. On December 1, 1935, a decree was signed and the Romanian envoy to Riga and Tallinn was appointed to Kaunas, too. Constantin Văllimărescu, the first Romanian envoy to Riga, was informed of this decision on December 18 and the agreement of the Lithuanian government was quick into coming.³⁶ This decision set the Romanian-Lithuanian relations on a track of normality, late but necessary.

Romania's absence from Kaunas for so many years was partly compensated by the very cordial reception the Lithuanian authorities made to Văllimărescu in January 1936 when he handed his credentials in the hands of the Lithuanian President Antanas Smetona. The head of state,

³⁵ Idman's dispatch no. 13 of 18.11.1935, UA, folder 5, microfilm C 14.

³⁶ Miloiu, 115.

Prime Minister Juozas Tūbelis and foreign minister Stasys Lozoraitis have all emphasized the significance of this event and underlined Romania's important role on the international arena. The main topic of discussion between Văllimărescu and the Lithuanian politicians was Romania's relations with the Soviet Union. This was a logical as it was the new eastern policy of Titulescu and the positive evolutions of the Romanian-Soviet relations that explain the very presence of Văllimărescu in Kaunas. Văllimărescu also remarked that "the satisfaction caused by the setting up of a Romanian Legation in Kaunas was obvious".³⁷

In the meantime, a new Lithuanian envoy was also appointed to Bucharest with residence in Prague. In fact, Lithuania's foreign stance grew worse following Hitler's accession to power in Germany given his declared interest in the fate of all Germans abroad. Therefore, Lithuania tried to encourage the development of better relations with Soviet Union. Thus, in December 1933 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, the Lithuanian envoy in Moscow, visited the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and pledged to reserved Soviet officials for better relations between the Lithuanian Army and the Red Army and for improving the Lithuanian defense capacities with Soviet help.³⁸

In these circumstances and with the 1934 Baltic Entente concluded, Lithuania also wanted the improvement of Lithuania's relations with the other Baltic states and with the countries in Central Europe. In a memo of May 1937 prepared for the Lithuanian Ministry of War, it was emphasized the importance of securing Latvia's benevolent neutrality in case of war, no less for assuring a retreat of the Lithuanian Army in this country in case of military defeat. As regards the side to choose in case of a German-Soviet conflict that appeared likely at that moment, the document read: "Lithuania would have the least chance to remain independent in case of Germany's triumph. Lithuania must join the states which oppose Germany's expansion."³⁹ There is no evidence to state that Lithuania thought differently several months before. Therefore, one can conclude that Lithuania's interest in Romania was also a function of Kaunas' national interest to strengthen the anti-German camp and to follow the evolutions that might lead to Romania joining the opponents of Berlin alongside France and Czechoslovakia.

³⁷ Constantin Văllimărescu's dispatch no. 32 of 20.01.1936 to Titulescu, AMAE, folder Latvia, 1921-1940. Relations with other states, Vol. 8, 106-109.

³⁸ Magnus Ilmjärv, "The Baltic States military and their foreign and defence policies 1933-1938", *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 7 (2003): 98.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

The Lithuanian envoy in Prague, Edvardas Turauskas, was the person chosen to represent Lithuania's interest in Romania. The audience for presenting his credentials on November 29, 1935, 12.30 o'clock at the Royal Palace to King Charles II is documented in the Romanian archives. Turauskas came to Bucharest to ask for audience with eight days in advance and he received a half an hour meeting with the sovereign because at 13 o'clock the Latvian envoy Martinš Nukša was scheduled to present his credentials, too. Adjutant General Nicolae Condeescu was in charge of bringing Turauskas from Hotel Stănescu, where he resided, to the Royal Palace. At the entrance to the Royal Palace, an 80 people big firing party and 14 soldiers had to play the Lithuanian national anthem and to present the honors to the Lithuanian envoy. The ceremony was attended from the Royal Civil House by Adjutant General Ernest Balliff, Baron I.V. Stârcea, Anton Mocsonzyi, Dr. I. Mamulea and Adjutant General Nicolae Condeescu and from the Military House by generals Constantin Ilasievici and Petre Grigorescu and Major Teofil Sidorovici.⁴⁰ This proves that at least in terms of ceremonial the Royal House gave the Lithuanian and Latvian representatives all the attention and honor habitual in these ceremonies and none of the six documents discovered in the Romanian archives prove that any difference would have been made between the treatment of Lithuanian and Latvian ministers. Nevertheless, according to Lithuanian documents referred at in this issue of *Revista Română de Studii Baltice și Nordice*, show Turauskas' dissatisfaction over the fact that the Lithuanian national anthem was not performed (and also that the King was brief and distant)⁴¹, which is difficult to reconcile with the story one may read in Romanian documents.

One of the recurrent themes to be found in the Romanian diplomats' assessments of Lithuanian foreign policy in the first half of the 1936 is the tensions between Poland and Lithuania. When visiting Colonel Beck at Polish Foreign Ministry in mid-January 1936, Constantin Dinu Hiott could learn about foreign minister's accusations that by encouraging the Ukrainian terrorist organizations in Poland, Lithuania constituted a danger to peace.⁴² In exchange, Beck's public accusations against Lithuania were received with deep dissatisfaction in Kaunas and fierce critics against Polish foreign policy could be heard at a time when the Lithuanian-German

⁴⁰ Miloiu, 113-114.

⁴¹ See Dalia Bukelevičiūtė, "The political and diplomatic relations between Lithuania and Romania (1935-1940)," *Revista Română de Studii Baltice și Nordice* 2, no. 1 (2010): 25-33.

⁴² Constantin Dinu Hiott's telegram no. 136 of 15.01.1936, în Laurențiu Constantiniu and Alin-Victor Matei, compilers, *Documente diplomatice române*, Seria a II-a, Vol. 18, Partea I (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), 55-56.

relations seemed to be moving on a good track springing from German interest to counter the growing Soviet influence in this country.⁴³ The worsening of the Lithuanian-Polish relations continued unabated in February due to anti-Lithuanian Polish staged meetings in Vilnius and in spite of the understanding by some Lithuanian Foreign Ministry high officials of the fact that the improvement of the relations with Warsaw was in Kaunas' advantage. Yet, the worry that a rapprochement between the two countries without any gain regarding Vilnius issue for the Lithuanian side might alienate the army and turn the nationalists against the regime prevented any courageous decision in this respect.⁴⁴

When Hitler proposed to several states in Central and Eastern Europe, Lithuania included, the signing of bilateral non-aggression pacts⁴⁵, the Romanian envoy to Warsaw, Constantin Vișoianu, "Titulescu's man" who shared Titulescu's reserves regarding Polish foreign policy, interpreted the Polish reception of the proposal as causing a shock in Warsaw. The Polish had counted on the German-Lithuanian tensions into curtailing Lithuania's choices to an alliance with Poland and now this assumption proved groundless.⁴⁶ This document demonstrates once more Romania's desire to think with its own mind on the realities in eastern Baltic, on the Polish-Lithuanian relations especially, as opposed to the uncritical "absorption" of Polish views on this region of the past decade and a half.

Soon, rumors about Polish desire to reach a rapprochement with Lithuania started to spread and were registered by the Romanian Legation in the Baltic states.⁴⁷ At the Tallinn Baltic Conference of May 7-9 it was even

⁴³ Synthesis of the Political Direction of the Romanian Foreign Ministry registered no. 5296 of 1.01.1936, in *Ibid.*, 129-130.

⁴⁴ Synthesis of the Political Direction of the Romanian Foreign Ministry no. 3 of 15.02.1936, in *Ibid.*, 204.

⁴⁵ What Hitler had in mind was however the "localization of war" because they included no clause to suspend their validity in case of aggression by either signatory against a third party. The aim was to prevent the achievement of collective and regional defense against aggression and thus ease Germany's drive in the region, R. Palme Dutt, *World politics, 1918-1936* (New York: Random House, 1936), 258. Besides, in the aftermath of the German troops entry in Rhenania, Hitler wanted to counter the Locarno Treaty signatories' possible military reactions to the unilateral German violation of the agreements, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Istoria relațiilor internaționale 1919-1947*, Vol. I (București: Editura Științelor Sociale și Politice, 2006), 149.

⁴⁶ Constantin Vișoianu's dispatch no. 789 of 13.03.1936, in Constantiniu and Matei, 346.

⁴⁷ Synthesis of the Political Direction of the Romanian Foreign Ministry no. 6 of 1.04.1936, in *Ibid.*, 468.

discussed a Polish project to start relations between Poland and Lithuania.⁴⁸ They were, however, as Georg von Rauch has noticed, more in line with Polish interests than with Lithuania's, a new proof of the excellent relations existing between Estonia and Poland.⁴⁹ The results ran however contrary to the intentions according to the information possessed by the Romanian Legation in Warsaw, Lithuania eventually attempting to further improving its relations with the Soviet Union.⁵⁰

From these reports come out the interests of Romania in the first months of the opening of the diplomatic channel with Lithuania, and in this respect Lithuania's relations with the Soviet Union, Poland, the Baltic states and Germany are most significant.

When Titulescu was removed in August 1936 from the position of foreign minister, the Romanian-Lithuanian relations were already registering some measure of progress and one of the areas of common interest was the likelihood that the two countries will be part of the same camp in case of a European war. Titulescu's intimate dialogue with Litvinov and with the Soviet envoy to Bucharest M.S. Ostrowski drew the attention of all diplomatic circles and was perhaps a matter of interest in Kaunas in what direction the Romanian-Soviet and Romanian-Polish relations were heading. Titulescu's removal did not fundamentally change Romania's foreign policy on the short-term, but it did negatively affect the Romanian-Soviet relations. The new foreign minister Victor Antonescu assured the *Auswärtiges Amt* that Titulescu's pro-Soviet policy was the reason for his firing.⁵¹

In the Romanian-Lithuanian relations, on November 11, 1936 Vasile Stoica followed Văllimărescu as envoy to Baltic states, the Transylvanian diplomat being also appointed to Kaunas.⁵² It could not perhaps have been made a better choice as Stoica had already cooperated with Lithuanian representatives in the United States at the end of First World War. The new envoy presented his credentials to President Smetona on March 9, 1937 and Smetona thanked him very warmly for the support given to Lithuania in the United States in 1918. As a symbol of gratitude, General Vladas

⁴⁸ Synthesis of the Political Direction of the Romanian Foreign Ministry no. 9 of 15.05.1936, in *Ibid.*, 752-753.

⁴⁹ Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States. The Years of Independence: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania 1917-1940* (London: C. Hurst, 1974), 185.

⁵⁰ Synthesis of the Political Direction of the Romanian Foreign Ministry no. 11 of 15.06.1936, in Constantiniu and Matei, 889.

⁵¹ Rebecca Haynes, *Politica României față de Germania între 1936 și 1940* (Iași: Polirom, 2003), 28.

⁵² An excellent monograph has been dedicated to Vasile Stoica by the Romanian historian Ioan Opriș, *Vasile Stoica în serviciul României* (București: Editura Oscar Print, 2008).

Nagevičius presented Stoica with a sculpture of a Lithuanian artist, Petervis. Stoica underlined in his speech and conversations what Romania and Lithuania had in common: fidelity to the League of Nations, respect to the national freedom of all peoples, attachment to the principles of collective security and reminded about the good relations between Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Moldova Principality during the Middle Ages.⁵³

Although not particularly satisfied with his posting in the frozen north, Stoica will be very actively promoting the relations with Lithuania. His aim was to improve Romania's relations with the countries situated in the area between the Baltic, Black and Egean seas, a task which required a "serious work" in order to reach "more profound relations" and "a frank and amiable cooperation with regard to mutually support each other in the economic field".⁵⁴ Stoica also strived, as he declared to the press, for a common awareness of the need to "intensify and deepen" these relations with the goal of "preserving their national and political independence".⁵⁵ Stoica also supported the enrichment of the Baltic libraries collection of books about Romania in order to counter the Hungarian revisionism in Latvia and Lithuania.⁵⁶ Anything can be said about Stoica's deeds, but that they lacked astute vision and understanding of the dangers and opportunities of this area. He was deeply aware of the little work done in order to implement the ideas he was striving for already in the last phases of the World War I based on domestic and international democracy, self-determination, rights for minorities, peace, compromise, regional cooperation and mutual understanding.⁵⁷

More importantly, the Romanian envoy wanted to use history in order to create that sort of basis for resetting the Romanian-Lithuanian relations on a favorable course. In January-February 1938, he held in Kaunas a series of four conferences about the medieval legend of Romanian origin of Lithuanians and Latvians, the Lithuanian relations with Moldova in the 14th and 15th centuries, the trade relations between the Black and the Baltic seas through Moldova in the 14th to 18th centuries and an overview of the Romanian history.⁵⁸ This was the first time a Romanian official pleaded for creating an arch over time for integrating the past and the present and the

⁵³ AMAE, folder 82, Lithuania, vol. 93, 4.

⁵⁴ ANIC, folder Vasile Stoica, file I/69, 12-13.

⁵⁵ Vasile Stoica's dispatch no. 86 of 27.02.1937 to V. Antonescu, AMAE, folder Latvia. Relations with other states.1920-1940, Vol. 8, 127-132.

⁵⁶ Vasile Stoica's dispatch no. 118 of 22.11.1937, Ibid., 134.

⁵⁷ Opreș, 62-109; Silviu Miloiu, „Activitatea desfășurată de Vasile Stoica în S.U.A. pentru cooperarea națiunilor central și sud-est europene”, *Cercetări Istorice (Serie Nouă)* XVIII-XX (2002): 449-461.

⁵⁸ Vasile Stoica's dispatch no. 724 of 24.03.1937, ANIC, folder Vasile Stoica, file I/69, 34-35.

only Romanian conferences held in interwar Lithuania. In only a few years Lithuania will be annexed by the Soviet Union, as it also happened with Romania's eastern part, Bessarabia.

By then, Titulescu's eastern grand design was already history and his striving to avoid the outbreak of a new world war proved fruitless. The Romanian-Lithuanian relations were slowly progressing, but Central and Eastern Europe had done too little to be able to keep the great powers surrounding them at bay. Lithuania, which was integrated in Titulescu's new eastern policy as player in the French-Czechoslovakian-Soviet anti-German League, will be paradoxically incorporated by Soviet Union with the consent of Germany. Before befalling over Nazi Germany in 1945, the *Götterdämmerung* descended over the unhappy small and mid-sized nations in the area.

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