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THE FRENCH - ROMANIAN RELATIONS (1866-1914)  
(SUMMARY)

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The research concerning the french-romanian relations proved itself to be a difficult one, but fulfilling at the same time, due to the big amount of diplomatical reports written by the french representatives accredited in Romania. They were interested in a variety of issues, which were revealed by their correspondence with the Department (Ministry) of Foreign Affairs, with their colleagues accredited in the neighboring countries or in the big european capitals (main cities), or between the different diplomatical institutions from Romania. They got involved in the debate of topics concerning the policy, the diplomacy, the economy, the navy, the medical status of the society, the society in general, the culture, the religion and the judiciary field. They have taken into consideration even what seemed to be the most insignificant details. From their reports, we have made a detailed selection and we were interested mostly by the political and diplomatical issues, but at the same time by some cultural and economical aspects. The information that we have researched and found, was corroborated as much as possible with the reports written by romanian diplomatical representatives accredited in France, but also with the studies from romanian and french historiography. We have tried to identify spectacular aspects, that weren't enough analised so far, or they were just mentioned. Also, during the whole study (paper), we emphasized the position or the opinion of France, seen by its representatives. Its constant advice was not always taken into consideration, furthermore, its good services were sometimes seen as a negative intervention, more then a favorable one.

The research sources – respectively, the diplomatical reports made or written by romanian and french representatives, the instructions, the minutes, the telegrams, the secret or coded telegrams, the different notes or memoires – were very rich in information of varied kind, from different fields of activity. Our paper was mostly realised from the researched documents that we've found in some

institutions from Romania and France, and the subjects that we've analysed were corroborated with some contributions given by the edited sources: articles, memoirs, collections of documents, dictionaries, yearbooks, encyclopedias, general or special studies.

The National Historical Archives from Bucharest made available to us the Collection of France microfilms, which consisted on hundreds of microfilm rolls (devices), each one containing at least 500 frames of document, going until 900 frames. The size of the documents varied depending on what the agent had to say, and the topics had a large variety concerning the policy, the diplomacy, the economy, the navy, the medical status of the society, the society in general, the culture, the religion and the judiciary field. From a chronological point of view, to each microfilm roll corresponded a period of time (a shorter or a longer one), depending on the way they were organised, the quantity of written reports or the chosen topic: the Rolls: 12 (1866); 13 (1866-1867); 14 (1868-1869); 15 (1869-1870); 16 (1871-1872); 17 (1873-1874); 18 (1875-1876); 19 (1876); 24 (1888,1894); 27 (1876-1877; 1878-1883); 45 (1868-1869; 1870-1879); 46 (1879); 69/47 (1880); 48 (1881-1882); 49 (1883-1884); 50; 51; 52; 53; 56; 58; 59; (1903-1907; 1907-1914); 65 (1887-1890; 1882-1886; 1887-1888); 82 (1822-1899); 83 (1879-1895); 77 (1862-1881); 97 (1867, 1871-1876); 173 (1850-1886); 263 (1886-1901).

The information obtained from this special stock of documents was corroborated with other sources of documents, analysed at the Center of Diplomatical Archives from Nantes (France), where we have found the Consulates' funds (stocks) (Iași and Galați), as well as the Embassies' (Constantinople and Wien). These gathered the correspondence with the Department (Ministry) of Foreign Affairs, with the diplomatical and consular group and they were structured on cardboards and each one of those was divided in one or more files on specific topics:

1. Fund Consulat Iași (Yassy), Cardboard: 4; 5; 13; 25; 29; 30; 31; 32; 33; 34; 56; 57.
2. Fund Consulat Galați (Galatz), Series 1822-1918, Cardboard: 14; 34; 56; 160.
3. Fund Embassy Constantinoples (Constantinople), Series E, Cardboard: 88 (1908-1909); 89 (1896-1899); 90 (1902-1914); 91 (1901-1914); 93 (1897-1912); 178 (1865-1866); 179 (1867-1868); 180 (1868-1869); 181 (1870-1871); 182 (1872-1873); 201 (Danube 1869-1870); 308 – The Balcanic Wars (1912-1913); 335 – The division of the territories (1913-1914); 711.
4. Fund Embassy Wien (Vienne), the General Consulat of France at Bucharest (1866-1869), Cardboard 393; Cardboard 491, File Romania (1912-1914).

At the Diplomatical Archives of Nantes, among the different categories of headings or files, we could recall the chronological correspondence of the post (as institution); themes (protocol, political issues or business, military affairs, navy problems, the medical status of the society, the society in general, the culture, the religion, the economy and the judiciary field; the french colony (consular affairs); the way the post (the institution) worked or how it was run (the staff or the personnel, the buildings and the archives).

As long as it was possible, the debated issues presented also a romanian point of view, but we must acknowledge that the Diplomatical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Bucharest (Fund Paris) didn't have the same theme challenge, and the written reports of romanian representatives were valuable but they also had many gaps or deficiencies, they were not constant and they didn't follow the consequences of an analysed problem. The inconsistent or unsteady dimension of the reports wouldn't have allowed us to examine properly an issue during its whole process and ending with a solution.

1. Fund Paris, Problem Politics, File: 2 (Correspondence and political reports – 1866); 3 (Correspondence and political reports – 1867-1869); 4 (Correspondence and political reports – 1870-1872); 5 (Correspondence and political reports – 1873-1874); 6 (Correspondence and political reports – 1875-1876); 7 (Correspondence and political reports – 1877-1878); Problem - Personnel, vol.618 (1860-1881); Problem - Personnel, vol.619 (1893-1894); Problem - Personnel, vol.620 (1897-1909); Problem - Protocol, vol. 626 (1878-1879) .
2. Fund Problem 21, Political Correspondence, vol.70.

The reduced but fulfilling research periods of time, that we've had at the Diplomatical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Paris – Quai d'Orsay) contributed to a better knowledge concerning the jewish problem, and to a better understanding over the Romanian or French foreign policy, but also that belonging to other european powers: La Nouvelle Série (1899-1914), Fund Romania, File Politique Intérieure (Question Juive 1899-1914); File No.4 – Political Correspondence (january-june 1881); File Politique Étrangère, No.5 - Dossier général et relations avec la France (1897-1914).

The paper was divided into 3 parts, with different sizes, the political relations having a large analysis in comparison with the diplomatical ones, or the cultural and economical approaches. The entire spectrum of French-Romanian contacts is relevant and very significant, and we've tried to examine – according to the information that we've found during the research – the most interesting circumstances in which the relations between the two countries materialised.

We considered necessary to begin with a short description of the international relations during the important year of 1866 and we insisted upon the controversial personality of the emperor Napoleon III – the one who supported and encouraged the Romanian people in order to apply the principle of foreign prince - , and the fulfilling of that particular objective which was fundamental (essential) for the romanian policy and which materialised by the coming of Charles of

Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. In order to express these aspects, we used edited sources both from Romanian and French historiography. In France, there are many studies and papers concerning the Second Empire and the unfortunate defeat of Sedan, but we have operated a selection of the relevant ones from our point of view. This controversial and paradoxical character (Napoleon III) – considered as such due to his decisions concerning the foreign policy – contributed in a real manner to the becoming of Romanian modern state, even though his accomplishments were minimized by the French historiography. From the Romanian point of view, he represented the spokesman of the nationalities principle, which made easier the coming of the German prince Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen on the throne of Romanian Principalities and Romania later.

The Romanian sources underlined some accomplishments of Napoleon III, but they insisted on the election of Charles, then they developed his internal and foreign policy or they analysed internal issues with international nuances. From these, a significant work - concerning even the opinion of France until the independence war - belonged to Nicolae Corivan, *Relațiile diplomatice ale României de la 1859 la 1877 (The Diplomatical Relations of Romania from 1859 until 1877)*, Bucharest, 1984. The French diplomatical agents realised a retrospection of the last months of Alexander I. Cuza's reign, his blamed situation, the instability of the country – a consequence of his fall from power - , the way in which Charles was elected, his voyage, his rise on the throne of the United Principalities, the opinion of the Ottoman Empire and that of the other European powers.

Most of the French diplomatical reports, corroborated with the edited sources, revealed us the approach to the strategy of foreign policy elaborated at the beginning of Charles' reign. We didn't insist upon his personality – we only reminded it, that being not our main objective. The information that we have found, read and analysed, presented the evolution of certain events such as the issue of

the bulgarian „groups” or „gangs” (ways of expression of patriotical feelings and national bulgarian conscience, they were helped and their actions encouraged by the romanian authorities, fact established by the french agents), the consular jurisdiction (the exemple given by the Dunin case and that of the consul of Greece at Brăila), the transportation of guns (the detailed description of some transports of weapons coming from Prussia and sent to Bulgaria), partially the jewish question, the french military mission (replaced by one coming from Prussia and ruled by Krensky), the Republic projects (the Republic of Ploiești seen from a french perspective) or the directions imagined in the foreign policy, but also the romanian railways affair (the analysis of Strousberg issue made by the french diplomatical representatives). We also dedicated a short part to the drawing of a partial portrait of romanian society's classes from a french perspective, in which the french agent emphasized the population over who Charles reigned in the '70s (XIXth century).

Another matter which revealed a part of European diplomacy relations, in which Romania and France played their role, was the problem of Danube and its status during the entire XIXth century. The Danube regarded directly Romania, and the regulation of its law (juridical) status interested the european countries, because the same arrangements were also proposed for this particular river in the same way as other european rivers which crossed mores countries. The romanian historians were very interested by the Danube issue, by the river's role, by Sulina, the harbours of Galați and Brăila, the works done all along the river (in Romania), the evolution of its law status, the institutions which declared themselves in favour of the liberty of navigation, the fighting against the hegemony of Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Barrère's project, the personnel and the realestate acquisitions, the activity of the institutions etc. One of the most well written books concerning this topic is represented by the one intituled *Comisia Europeană a Dunării și opera sa (1856-1931) (The European Commission of the Danube and its Work)*, Paris, 1931, due to its complexity, and it described the history of the institution, the treaties which debated the future of the commission or different

decisions concerning its activity and obligations, the list of the countries, of european members, the services of the commission, its financial status, the properties, activities, the developement of the commerce on the Danube etc.

The death of Napoleon III and the attitude of romanian authorities from Bucharest, the new perspectives and directions in the foreign policy (there is high promoted the concept of „independence” towards the Ottoman Empire, and a first step on this path was determined by the commercial convention concluded directly with the great neighbouring empires Austro-Hungary and Russia). All these phases of evolution of the Romanian modern state were accurately noticed by the french diplomacy, very interested in the equilibrium of power and statu-quo in the area.

The oriental question was not seen from the normal perspective of the events, our wish was that of revealing new aspects written in the reports made by the french representatives: the new phase of the Strousberg affair, the french conclusion of Livadia meeting (reunion), Romania – as a transit territory, the french opinion about the relations between romanian and russian armies, some exemples of vandalism acts, robberies, murders made by turquish people on the left side of the Danube. A definetly new thing – only from one source, we couldn't find any other kind of information about this event - was represented by the strategy imagined by Russia in order to corrupt Osman Paşa at Plevna (1877).

We wrote about the end of the war between Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Romania and the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and its consequences for the european countries, but after that, we insisted on the changing of the 7th article of 1866 Constitution and the emancipation of the jews, their right of becoming romanian citizens, but also the moment of the recognition of Romania's independence by the european powers and especially France. The policy followed by France at Berlin emphasized its wish to overcome the political and diplomatical consequences of Sedan. France thought about an active political strategy, but a prudent one and in cooperation with Germany and England. She hated a possible



self exclusion or the recognition of its wickedness on the European stage and she tried to maintain the distance towards the great European powers in order not to incite trouble.

For almost two decades (after the French-Prussian war), France watched carefully and from a distance the evolution of the events in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, but its presence in Romania was identified through different political, diplomatic, cultural and economical elements. Even though, certain coldness between the French-Romanian relations was produced following two interventions – considered unfortunate by the Romanian part which accused France of wickedness every time there was a chance of doing so - . One of the two was at Berlin, when Waddington proposed the emancipation of the Jews from Romania by giving them all the civil and political rights, and the other issue that caused a great deal of resentment was the problem of the Danube – the Barrère project -, by which Romania saw itself as being a victim of France. By this project, France helped Austro-Hungary to gain power over the Romanian side of the river, and at the same time Romania having lost the cause. The constant interest of France for the Jews in Romania – based upon the liberal principle of human rights -, eventually won, thus the emancipation of the Jews became a fact. They could become Romanian citizens, but the process was very difficult, and each and every person should apply for that and after long years of waiting, they acquired their citizenship. France would have to pass through a big scandal or public exposure concerning the Jews at the end of XIXth century – the Dreyfus affair - , in which there would be involved a variety of social and mental forces. Different interpretations over the beginning, during and the end of the issue, mixed a few concepts not enough understood by the people, the stranger, the Jew, the spy and the homosexual. These terms produced different reactions among the people and the Dreyfus affair separated France into two parts.

We also underlined the international relations at the end of the XIXth century using sources from both Romanian and French historiography. My

objective was that of explaining in a little introduction, the evolution and the tendencies that have happened on the international stage, the system of alliances imagined by Bismarck but also the disputes or the interests of the European countries. Romania and its relations with the great powers or with France were included into this history of international relations. The constant interest of the French diplomacy towards the direction of the Romanian foreign policy and its evolution at the end of the XIXth century, the fall of the long government of I. C. Brătianu (1888), some aspects concerning the movement of the Memorandum, but also an international scandal (the Dreyfus affair), represented our main objective. The French diplomacy perceived the opinion of the official papers (but not only that) concerning the Romania's status, between the Central Powers and Russia, and such, every visit, speech, human approach, sympathy or a certain opinion that the politicians might have had, were all very well analysed and interpreted.

The French representatives had instructions in order to properly inform if there existed or not an arrangement assumed by Romania. The Transylvanian issue was only partly described, and it was obvious once the documents were researched. The French reports presented only some events or facts that have happened, some meetings and the actions of the public opinion. The debate concerning the direction given to the Romanian foreign policy (1883) interested France in a particular manner, and the reports described the two major options. The French agents mentioned the pros and cons of choosing one side or the other, Russia or Austro-Hungary. The fall of the long liberal government from 1888 was emphasized in an original style by the French diplomacy. There was described an example of manipulation of the people and the importance of charismatic figures, the principle of „man of the hour” being present all the way. Concerning the Dreyfus affair, we revealed two different and surprising explanations and we didn't try to analyse deeper, because the whole issue was very well researched by the French historiography.

The crisis that could easily lead to war and that could have involved the systems of alliances, repeated themselves one after another during the decade before the First World War. The wick balance between the European powers became obvious with the Russian-Japanese war, the two Marocco crisis, the revolution of the Young Turcs, the annexation of Bosnia-Herțegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Italian-Turquish war, followed by the two Balkan wars. The higher point was touched by the greatest war that the world ever known so far. For the first decade of the XXth century, we presented the main directions in France's foreign policy and we mentioned its interests, but we also reminded about the part that Romania had played in the area, being surrounded by three great empires (Russia, Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire).

The French-Romanian diplomatic relations, definitions of the diplomacy, the evolution of French institutions in Romania, the titles, the obligations and the advantages, the ceremonies and the protocol, special cases of diplomats, qualities, activity, the way of dressing, their pay, there were all topics that we were interested in during the second chapter of our work. The diplomatic personnel of the French and Romanian hierarchy could be revealed using the Diplomatic and Consular Yearbooks of the French Empire and later the Republic. Knowing the French representatives accredited in Romania during the entire reign of Charles Ist, is a pattern, an exemple and a work material for the researchers or historians interested in the reproduction of the diplomatical hierarchy or system, but also for those who are not certain about the period of time that one agent worked in our country temporarily. Concerning the reproduction of the Romanian diplomatical personnel or hierarchy in France, we discovered lacks of information, or confusions between the French and Romanian sources, about the periods of time that the agents spent in Romania or even about some particular individuals, their true identity being unknown (ex. a certain N..., who was Romanian plenipotentiary minister in Paris – 1891).

The cultural aspects that we've described didn't represent the main topic of many studies. What we wanted to reveal were the obstacles that appeared in the way of spreading the french language in Romania (especially in Moldavia), subjective obstacles, intrigues and personal interests. We thought necessary to invoke such examples and intentions of increasing the french influence among the Romanian communities and the young generations. Thus, the official and declared strategy of the French Alliance – National Society of Spreading the French Language among the Colonies and Abroad – was based upon the idea that in the Orient, the moral prestige of France was endangered if the french became unknown, thus resulting commercial troubles because the exchanges would become very difficult. From a cultural point of view, very significant proved to be the instructive institution of Notre Dame de Sion, led by french catholic nuns. In this institution, the french language, culture and traditions were very important and they contributed to the spreading of the french spiritual values among the romanian population, even that of orthodox confession.

The economical relations between Romania and France made necessary their settlement by a bilateral treaty. This new things that we have found during our research are significant, and they make more clear the evolution of the French-Romanian contacts and removed the wrong conclusions or theories which existed before. The quantity dimension is not very good emphasized and the exchanges between the two parts not very well described. This task was very difficult to establish due to the official statistics which were not at all the same, they presented uncertainty, irregularity and partiality. Our objective was that of revealing the evolution of bilateral negotiations and the way that led the two countries to the settlement of commercial relations.

Despite all the ups and downs in the French-Romanian relations, the interest of France for the „little country” of the Danube was a permanent one during the second half of the XIXth century, fact established with certainty by the great deal of diplomatic reports written by the French representatives in Romania.

There are a few well known stereotypes that described Romania – „Belgium of the Orient”, „Japan of Europe”, „Swiss of the Orient” – but there can be also another one, that of „French Colony in Orient”, but this concept can’t be assumed in reality. We can’t apply the term of colony to Romania, but France tried in different ways to spread its influence in the area, but there were obstacles that the Romanian authorities put in this path and many subjective circumstances. The attempts of getting closer and of intensify the French-Romanian relations were registered in the economic domain or field, being encouraged by both sides and materialised by a bilateral commercial convention. But the most significant relations were the political ones, through the diplomacy which put its eyes on the Romanian government and which was interested by all the events that happened in this area or in this country surrounded by three empires with different foreign policy.

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In order to complete the themes that we tried to analyse and which were found during our research, a real contribution was brought by the published sources from Romania and France. These books, studies, articles helped us with our analysis and emphasized our personal ideas or contribution to the making of a significant image of French-Romanian relations in the second half of the XIXth century and the beginning of the XXth century.