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**British-Romanian Relations between  
1936-1941  
(Summary)**

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**Cluj-Napoca  
2011**

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**Keywords:** anti-Semitism, Balkan Entente, Battle of Britain, British citizens, British newspapers, Charles II, Little Entente, Munich conference, Germany, Great Britain's foreign policy, League of Nations, Legionary Movement, oil, political guarantees, Romania's foreign policy, loans, Romanian newspapers, Sir Reginald Hoare, wheat.

## Introduction

In most of the interwar period, precisely until 1938, Great Britain had no well-defined political or economic strategy towards Romania. Nearly all of the British actions related to the Romanian area started from general principles such as maintaining peace, the *status quo* established after the Peace Conference in Paris or the influence of the League of Nations. Romania had no official alliance with Great Britain, but its role of guarantor of the organization which had its headquarters in Geneva, ensured the existence of good relations between the two countries. For the British public opinion, but also for most of the politicians, Romania was a remote country in Eastern Europe, to which one could arrive after three days by train or after a flight of 14 hours, a direct route being absent.

The study of Romanian-British relations during 1936-1941 represents a typical analysis case between, on the one hand, a great power vanquisher in the First World War, guarantor of the previously established *status quo* and, on the other hand, a relatively small state that had obtained significant territorial gains in 1918 and whose territorial integrity was based on the Treaties of Paris Peace Conference. From an economic perspective, the Romanian-British relations represented the typical situation of collaboration between a strong, industrialized economy which mainly exported finished products and a predominantly agricultural economy which exported especially raw materials. However, even if the relations from the years 1936-1941 between Great Britain and Romania represent a classical analysis situation, this does not mean that interesting research topics for the six years taken into account can not be found.

## CHAPTER I

### Great Britain's Foreign Policy towards Europe (1933-1939). General Features

Contrary to many misconceptions that exist today, the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany did not brought changes in the attitude Great Britain had towards this country. After all, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor legally winning this position through the results NSDAP had obtained in the November 1932 elections, and then the President Hindenburg himself appointed him to form a new government. Even if long before London knew that the new party which came to power was not the advocate of parliamentarism and democracy, the members of the British government had little reasons to be worried.

Confident in its ability to defend itself if a threat occurred, throughout the interwar period, Great Britain obstinately refused to sign an alliance with any of the European states, becoming the custodian of the power balance in Europe, which made the establishment of domination of a nation or group of nations impossible. However, starting 1936, the year that Rhineland was remilitarized, the Foreign Office had to consider even more Germany's demands regarding international relations. Thus, starting 1935, the appeasement had appeared and the situation became more and more complicated for the British due to the demands other great power such as Soviet Union and Italy plus Japan in the Far East had.

During the interwar period, Great Britain was somehow overwhelmed by the difficulties it had to face in the foreign policy field. As major world power, as the holder of the largest empire that ever existed, and according to the traditional islander attitude, Britain wanted to turn its back on Europe. However, against their will, the same status of major power forced the British to take over the European affairs in order to maintain peace through negotiations and diplomatic review of the Central-Eastern European borders. The efforts to

maintain peace with the Germans and the collaboration with the Soviets have failed, the only alternative left being the war.

### **Romania's Foreign Policy (1933-1940). General Features**

Without doubt, in the first half of the fourth decade of the twentieth century, Romania's foreign policy was marked by the work of Nicolae Titulescu, who for four years (1932-1936) was the head of Romanian diplomacy, being a "permanent" minister even if during this period there were several governances of the National Peasants' Party and of the National Liberal Party. Although Titulescu was the Minister for Foreign Affairs during July 6, 1927- July 30, 1928, he managed to assert his vision of foreign policy in the second "term" as Minister at Sturdza Palace.

If the Little Entente was the basis of Romania's foreign policy in the interwar period, this was even more visible when Nicolae Titulescu was the Minister for Foreign Affairs making account of this regional alliance of which Romania was a part, but also to the future Balkan Entente which was formed in 1934. At the same time, the head of Romanian diplomacy continued the orientation towards France and Great Britain, while giving special attention to the League of Nations. The relations with Germany, as well as those with Hungary and Bulgaria were neglected. It should be noted that in 1934 the Romanian-Soviet relations were normalized through the opening of Diplomatic Offices in Bucharest and Moscow.

The rise of Germany in international relations, combined with the pronounced weakening of the League of Nations, led to the dismissal of Nicolae Titulescu as head of Romanian diplomacy.

The Foreign Ministers that followed, Victor Antonescu, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, Istrate Micescu and Grigore Gafencu, maintained Romania's foreign policy orientation towards France and Great Britain but they have paid increased attention to Germany, as it began to be perceived as the only continental power able to oppose the Soviet Union.

Given the outbreak of the Second World War, Romania proclaimed its neutrality, which helped losing Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, and then to give most of Transylvania to Hungary and southern Dobruja to Bulgaria.

The rise to power of General Antonescu, and also of the Iron Guard legitimated the closeness with Germany. On November 23, 1940, in Berlin, took place the official accession of Romania to the Tripartite Pact. The entry into the Axis camp ended the oscillations of the Romanian foreign policy; the political leaders in Bucharest declaring themselves for joining Germany, as in 1940 it was the only power able to protect the Romanian territory from a new soviet aggression. At the same time, through a close economic and military cooperation with the Reich, the Romanian government led by Ion Antonescu sought to win Hitler's kindness in order to cancel the provisions of the Vienna Dictate. Thus, because of the situation that existed in Europe at that time, out of opportunism, but also out of necessity, Romania entered the German camp, although almost all interwar period it had a strong attachment towards the two democratic powers from Western Europe, France and Great Britain.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **The Visit of King Carol II in Great Britain (1936)**

Because Great Britain was one of the two great democratic powers towards which the Romanian foreign policy was directed since 1935, King Carol II expressed his willingness to pay an official visit to this country. The purpose of this trip was to give a new impulse to the bilateral relations, but also to stimulate the interest of British decision-makers towards Romania. The visit the Carol II planned long before took place under very unusual conditions since it was made on January 28, 1936, when the funerals for George V were held. On this occasion, one of the topics addressed by Nicolae Titulescu was the problem represented by the possible return of the Habsburgs to Austria's leadership, through Otto von Habsburg. As it was easy to guess, fearing of a possible reestablishment of the Austrian domination in the southeast Europe, the head of Romanian Diplomacy sought to convince his British interlocutors by the injustice of this action.

Initially planned for April 1936, but carried out much earlier, in January, due to the unexpected death of King George V, the visit of Carol II in Great Britain had confirmed the existence of good relations between Romania and the western islander power. Even if there were no spectacular results, the Romanian sovereign's stay in London, but also the warm welcome he enjoyed represented significant indicators for the high degree of collaboration between the two countries.

### **The Attitude of Great Britain towards Romania's Regional Alliances (1936-1938)**

The formation of the Little Entente in 1921 and of Balkan Entente in 1934 were not too important events for the British Diplomacy for it was known that, during the interwar period, the Foreign Office was not so interested in the eastern part of Europe. In addition, officials in London were aware that the two regional alliances revolve around the French foreign policy which determined them to leave to Paris the primacy of political action in this part of Europe.

Because of the importance the Foreign Minister Titulescu attached to the two regional alliances, the relations of Great Britain with the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente significantly improved during 1936, evidenced by the fact that more and more people in the diplomatic circles in England talked about them. In the early 1937, there were signs from Great Britain showing an increased interest towards tightening the relation with the Little Entente, an attitude proved by more indirect information.

### **The Official Visit of King Charles II in Great Britain (15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> November 1938)**

The conference from Munich, by which Czechoslovakia lost the Sudetenland in favour of Germany, determined states from Central-Eastern Europe to confront with a totally unexpected situation, which took by surprise the diplomacies of these countries. These important changes on the line of international relationships determined King Charles II by no means to delay his official visit in the capital of Great Britain.

The same as functionaries of Foreign Office had intuited two weeks before the visit took place, the purpose of the visit of the Romanian official in London was to find out to what extent the British government was willing to support an intensification of economic exchanges

between England and Romania, as well as granting some loans necessary for arming and economic development, to which may be added even guaranteeing of borders. Furthermore, the Romanian sovereign wanted to observe the degree of interest manifested by the British over protection of vital commercial ways for the British Empire, ways that were accessible through the Lower Danube and the Black Sea.

Romanian guests enjoyed a warmth welcome on behalf of the English King, George VI, the same attitude having also High British officials. Different formal festivities took place during the three days. In spite of all these, the results of that visit were quite modest, because the Romanian delegation could not obtain a credit for buying war material produced in England, while economically, the British, without disengaging completely, acknowledged commercial superiority of Germany in south-eastern Europe.

Made in a period when important changes took place within rapports of power in Europe, the visit of the Romanian king in London represented a consequence of the decision taken in Munich, Romania being the first country from Central-Eastern Europe which reacted the within the new international frame by an action of this type. Official visiting of Great Britain did not have the expected results, being confirmed the fact that Romania hardly could be helped by the British and French in front of the pretensions of revisionist states.

### **The Goga-Cuza Government and the “Jewish Problem”. British Perceptions**

The government presided by Octavian Goga was officially appointed on 28 December 1937. The implementation of the promised anti-Jewish policy started already on the second day of this government. The democratic newspapers *Adevărul*, *Dimineața*, and *Lupta*, being considered Jewish, as well as all newspapers published in Yiddish and Hebrew were suspended. On 1 January 1938, although it was a national holiday, National Insurance House fired all its Jewish employees, followed by the immediate publication of the list of Romanians who replaced them. These actions were in accordance with the statements of the Labour Minister, Gheorghe Cuza, son of A.C. Cuza, the one who declared that the Romanians was enjoying the right to work, and “from this point of view only those Romanians can be considered as Romanians if they had ethnic Romanian origin, Romanian soul Romanian blood, and not the Romanian citizens.” The government Goga-Cuza exerted its rule by issuing decrees and in one of these forbade the Jews to employ Christian servants under the age of 40, considering that “the Jews using in their homes Romanian women do it in order to draw them into prostitution”. A greater influence had the 22 January decree, which stipulated that the citizenship of the Jews in Greater Romania was to be revised, regardless of the length of their families’ residences in the country. From a total of 203,423 Jewish families which submitted applications for revision of citizenship, 73,253 lost it, representing 36% of the Jewish population of Romania. In view of this surge of anti-Semitism in Romania, the British government had to react, especially because Great Britain subscribed to the Treaty of Protection of Minorities, signed on 9 December 1919, by which Romania accepted the obligation of giving equal terms to all its citizens. The news regarding the violence and persecution of the Jews in Romania disgusted the British public, an unsurprising phenomenon given the sensibility of the English public opinion towards any form of injustice.

The Jews from Romania, and mostly the British Jews, as well as the international Jewish associations reacted to the measures of Goga government, seeking to put pressure on it in order to mitigate its anti-Semitic policy. There were numerous complaints addressed to the international organization from Geneva. The Universal Israelite Alliance, the International Jewish Congress, the Committee for the Defence of Jew’s Rights in Central and eastern

Europe, centred in Paris, the Jewish minority in Romania submitted documents which described the persecutions of the Jewish population in Romania. There was even a protest signed by the representatives of women working in industry in Great Britain, organizations which spoke in the name of 1,5 million persons.

On 10 February 1938, after 44 days in power, Octavian Goga presented his resignation, as requested by King Charles II. However, through its policy towards the national minorities, the government of the National-Christian Party represented a turning point in the interwar Romanian history. Even though it did not have the time necessary for the implementation of its projects, its “heritage” was employed by the next governments from Romania.

### **Patriarch Miron Cristea’s Government and His Policy towards Jews. The Attitude of Great Britain**

Even if during his rule Miron Cristea has not passed laws against Jews, trying to a certain extent to mitigate the anti-Semitic violence generated during Goga-Cuza government, it is worth mentioning that he kept all the anti-Jewish legislation inherited from the previous government. As such, the quality of Romanian citizens has been withdrawn to a large number of Jews.

Officials in London have shown deep interest in the situation that existed in Romania, since Great Britain was the guarantor power of the Minorities’ Protection Treaty from 1919, a diplomatic document which was signed by Romania through its representatives sent to Paris during the peace conference that followed the First World War. As such, the opposition members in the House of Commons have made plentiful inquiries about the attitude of British Diplomacy towards the fate of Jews in Romania, mainly asking for the concrete actions taken in this regard.

The policy of the government towards minorities was mostly determined by the relations Romania had with the great powers in the west. Romanian officials were aware that promoting a hostile policy towards the Jewish population was likely to lead to a closeness of Romania towards Germany, but in the same time, the government in Bucharest was considering the tightening of the relations with Great Britain and France, countries that were deeply interested in minority rights.

### **The Foreign Policy of the Legionary Movement during the National-Legionary State in Romania. Attitude towards England**

Taking into account the incessant Romanian-Russian antagonism, the Legionary Movement’s permanent position was that British foreign policy is incompatible with that of Romania, the latter having problems and enemies different from those of England. The belief in the negative role that the Jews had in Romania and the powerful influence of the Jewish circles in England increased the anti-English feelings of the legionaries. England was accused, directly or indirectly, of all evils possible, the anti-English psychosis being extremely strong within the Legionary ranks. Accordingly, the British guarantee to Romania in April 1939 was nothing more than empty words and London was considered the centre of the world Jewish Masonry. The loss of Bessarabia and the Vienna Award would never have taken place if there had not been for the alignment of Romania’s foreign policy to that of the Foreign Office. Poland allegedly refused the German invitation to discussions due to English interference, thus England being blamed for the start of the Second World War itself. The activity of the



governments in exile to London – who, according to the members of the Legionary Movement, led a policy opposed to the interests of their own countries - did not escape notice, as neither did the tendency of the British diplomacy to encircle Germany. The conclusion to all these was that, according to the legionaries, an alliance with England was out of the question. What is more, England had to be driven away from the continent, since its *perfidiousness* was the cause of all blamable events in the past, in the area of international relations.

### **The Status of British Citizens during the National-Legionary State in Romania**

Political relations between Great Britain and Romania were strained during all the period of the national-legionary state (September 1940-January 1941). Precarious bi-lateral relationships was definitely determined by two issues: the detention of British vessels on the Danube by Romanian authorities, but especially because of the arrest of some British citizens and their subsequent maltreatment by the Legionary Movement. Because of British investments made in oil extraction and processing here existed a significant number of British subjects, together with their families, being in most cases engineers for the oil companies. Considering that these subjects are nothing more than saboteurs under cover, having the mission to repeat the operations of blowing up of oil installations from Valea Prahovei as it happened in WWI, the members of the Legionary Movement kidnapped some of them and subsequently maltreated them at the end of September and beginning of October 1940.

Nurturing the conviction that Romania needs to get rid of those with “British blood” in their veins, the inquest of the legionaries was extremely brutal, this attitude being justified, as they said, by the killing of more than 2 thousand legionaries under King Charles II, among whom Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, as well as by the poor relationships between Germany and Romania. In these, it was considered that the British involvement was undeniable, and consequently, they did not behave nicely in none of the cases of the British people. The inquest procedure consisted in, firstly, asking a question, or rather suggesting a course of answer. Not getting the desired answer, the investigators used to beat the investigated person quite badly, after which the question was asked again, until they got the desired answer. It is also worthwhile to say that psychological tortures were applied.

Because of the forceful interventions made with Romanian authorities by the British plenipotentiary minister at Bucharest, Sir Reginald Hoare, as well as by the Consul Norman Mayers, the British citizens kidnapped by the legionaries were returned to the competent authorities, who established their complete innocence. They were all released and left the Romanian territory, for fear they should fall again prey to the legionaries. They arrived at the American Hospital in Istanbul, where they needed long medical care.

The general crisis created by the illegal arrest of the British citizens represented the first serious problem of the legionary government’s foreign affairs, which led to the creation of huge resentment both in public opinion in Great Britain, and among the diplomats, which will fully contribute, a few months later, to the break-up of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

### **Romanian Immigration to Great Britain in 1941**

After World War II broke out and diplomatic ties between Romania and Great Britain were severed, numerous Romanians remained in Great Britain, refusing to return to their home country. Most of them had belonged to the Romanian Legation in London. V.V. Tilea was the first to set up a Free Romanian Movement, in October 1940. It failed however, because the British could not acknowledge both the Antonescu government and an opposition movement in London.

After Great Britain and Romania reciprocally closed their legations on February 15, 1941, two rival Romanian groups were created in Britain. The Romanian Democratic Committee and the Free Romanian Movement both desired to be officially accepted by the British authorities. The British government acknowledged neither group, due to the extremely small number of group members and due to the absence of any known Romanian politician in their ranks.

Romania's part in the German offensive against Russia did not change matters. When Great Britain declared war on Romania on December 7, 1941, Romanian immigrants from the UK lost all hope to have their political movements acknowledged. Moreover, the Foreign Office advised Romanian immigrants to avoid politics and to enrol in the British army, if they wished to.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **Romanian-British Economic Relations between 1936-1938**

The analysis of the Romanian-British economic relations between 1936-1938 is of considerable importance, since, economic powers involve political power. That is why it is important to trace the degree of involvement of the United Kingdom in the Romanian economy, taking into consideration the fact that the British together with the French, were the main guarantors of the Versailles-system. Equally relevant is the amount of Romanian trading relations with the two great democratic powers from Western Europe, since, there had to be a concordance between the orientation of Romania's foreign policy and the economic exchanges of the two powers. One of the factors that somewhat affected the Romanian-British trade was the difference that existed between the two types of economy. While the United Kingdom was one of the few countries in the world enjoying a free market, almost in the traditional meaning of the word, the British imports and exports being unhindered by interventions from the part of the authorities, Romanian economy was held under control. In other words, the import quota, i. e. the control and restriction of imports according to certain norms, and even the instatement of a Board meant to establish such quotas, were clear marks of the state's interference in the economy, which was actually turning trade offices into intervention offices.

An essential problem affecting the Romanian-British economic relations, between 1936-1938, was constituted by arrears. They were the sums that the banks and the Romanian merchants owed to the United Kingdom. The British maintained the necessity of creating a clearing office. Payments were made by way of the two national banks. In other words, instead of a payment going from debtor to creditor, the payment was made to a clearing account. The creditor received the money from the national bank of his country, while the debtor deposited the money in the national bank of his own country.

Although Romania was very much interested in the export towards hard currency countries, its export was mostly directed towards soft currency countries. For example, Romania imported more German products than British ones. This situation remains unchanged for the whole year 1937 and for the beginning of 1938 as well. The same cannot be said for the second half of the year 1938, when the British made up a plan meant to increase their economic and political presence in South-East Europe, with a special focus on Romania. This plan later materialized in the creation of an interdepartmental agency, named the Committee for Economic Pressure on Germany. In point of economy, the years preceding Second World War, 1938 included, were marked by considerable British investments of capital in Romania, with a special focus on petroleum.

The United Kingdom, which before 1938, had not a clearly delineated economic policy in East-Central Europe in general and in Romania in particular, afterwards changed its attitude

towards this part of Europe. The idea that the policy of the Chamberlain government towards Germany between 1938-1939 was no more than a coward yielding before the German threat proves to be a wrong one, since Chamberlain opposed the German expansion economically, trying to create here an economic anti-German bloc.

### **Romanian-British Economic Relations (1939-1940)**

Since the spring of 1939, the British began to be increasingly concerned about the Germany's politic and economic offensive in Central and Eastern Europe. In response to this situation, the British government has intensified its actions, deciding to block the expansion of the Third Reich in the eastern part of Europe by providing some political guaranties, by signing economic agreements and by increasing the purchases of goods from countries in this part of the continent, including Romania.

By increasing its economic presence in the eastern part of Europe, Great Britain actually applied its traditional balance policy, this time in economy. Following the negotiations in Bucharest, on May 11, 1939 a British-Romanian protocol was signed. Thus, were created the bases for enhancing the bilateral commerce, favoring especially the Romanian exports in Great Britain.

However, Germany has remained the major economic partner of Romania even if the British imported large quantities of oil and wheat from the south eastern state during 1939 and 1940. The start of the "Battle of Britain" in May 1940, shortly followed by the fall of France has helped Germany's economic domination in Romania to be total and this had significant political consequences.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **The Romanian Exhibition in London (April – May 1938)**

Scheduled to be launched on King Carol II's visit to England, the exhibition organised under the auspices of the government in Bucharest and with the aid of the Romanian Legation in London, was opened in the British capital and could be visited between 7 April and 24 May 1938. It was aimed, quite obviously, at improving British-Romanian relations and achieving a better recognition of Romanian realities among the British public. Hosted in one of Duke of Westminster's most elegant residences, the sumptuous palace lying in Grosvenor Square, in the aristocratic Mayfair, the exhibition representing a general presentation of Romania had three sections covering several chambers. A fourth section, which was essentially a tourist information desk, and a subsection containing a general overview of the country were add.

The exhibition sponsor was King Carol II and there were also two committees: one of honour comprising high English personalities presided by the Countess of Oxford and Asquith, and an executive one whose president was B. Grigorcea, the wife of the Romanian Plenipotentiary Minister in London. According to a report drawn in the first days of the exhibition, the daily average number of visitors was, despite the fact it was near the Easter holidays, between 75 and 120 people, consisting mostly of teachers, priests, students at various English universities, therefore, a rather choice attendance fond of art. Few of them had precise knowledge of Romania, however, which was a confirmation of the fact that Westerners knew very little of Eastern Europe, their attitude being one of kind ignorance.

Organised against a backdrop of tensed international relations, with Germany beginning to utterly disregard the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, but also in a time when the political

regime in Romania was undergoing significant changes, the exhibition in London achieved immense success among British visitors. As a result, suggestions were received to mount a permanent exhibition focusing exclusively on Romanian folk art, at the British Museum. This is yet another example of how political aims can be reached by means of culture. British-Romanian bilateral relations improved significantly in the spring of 1938, in spite of the fact a mild and, apart from that, anti-Semitic dictatorial regime was installed in Romania.

### **Great Britain's Cultural Influence in Romania during 1936-1940**

Although most of the Romanians remained Francophile rather than Anglophile, in the late 30s of the last century many of them were eager to know much of everything related to England, because along with France, England was considered one of the world's leading nations. An important cultural role was played by the Anglo-Romanian Society established in 1927 and also the "English House".

In 1936, at the initiative of the British government, at the University of Bucharest was opened a department of English Language and Literature, a successful action evidenced by the large number of students interested in this subject.

In August 1939, the Foreign Office requested for the first time that BBC should introduce the news in Romanian language, request which was realized soon after the outbreak of the war. On September 12, the first broadcasting was made, a 15 minutes newscast, to which subsequently were added programs of political commentaries and even some cultural shows. The 1940 defeat of France had not only political, but also cultural significant consequences, affecting the cultural propaganda of Great Britain. Initiated with a major handicap towards France and Germany, the British cultural influence in Romania was weak throughout the interwar period. A certain revival of the cultural bilateral relations can be seen in 1936 and it continued until 1940. But the political events have heavily influenced the British-Romanian cultural relations.

### **Romania's Propaganda through Culture in Great Britain (1936-1938)**

Facing the hostile attitude of Hungary and Bulgaria, small revisionist states, to which the Soviet Union could be added, Romania has paid increased attention to counteracting in the West the effects of Hungarian and Bulgarian propaganda. Great Britain was considered as having a very special significance and the efforts made by the Bucharest government in promoting Romania's image throughout the English territory matched this significance.

Knowing the fact that England is the country of the first newspaper and the public opinion plays an important role in decision making, it is not surprising that there have been made some efforts in this field, wanting that the information about Romania to be as advertised as possible among the islanders. Thus, whenever an English journalist wanted to come to Romania for documentation for an article about Romanian realities, his request was favorably solved.

Besides newspapers, another type of publication through which the cultural propaganda was made was represented by the activity of books publishing. Part of this category was the English translations of several famous Romanian novels, some traveling guides about Romania and also the publishing of some biographical papers.

The actions of Romanian cultural propaganda which took place between 1936 and 1938 were plentiful, the Bucharest authorities being interested in how the image of Romania was promoted among the British public opinion. However, taking into account that there was no

longstanding tradition of cultural relations between the two countries, but also because a comparison with the Hungarian cultural propaganda in the Anglo-Saxon world was always made, it seemed that more could be done, which is partially true.

## CHAPTER V

### **The Battle of Britain as Reflected by the Romanian Press of Time (June – December 1940)**

Although Great Britain and Germany had officially declared war on each other as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1939, the first direct confrontation between the two countries, excluding the participation of the British Expeditionary Force on French territory, occurred only at the beginning of July 1940, when the first air raid over England took place.

The Romanian press of the time covered the development of the conflict with great interest, but, as it was to be expected, the events were presented in a light favourable to Germany, since Romania was already a satellite of the Third Reich as far as foreign policy was concerned. In articles published daily in newspapers such as *Universul* or *Curentul*, two dailies with wide circulation in the interwar period, Romanian journalists, without exception, wrote article favourable to Germany, and, obviously, criticizing Great Britain, expressing the authors' complete adherence to the new European order which was to be instituted by the German National-Socialist régime.

As a natural consequence of the above mentioned situation, Romanian readers could find out daily that German raids had been successfully, only strategic military targets being hit almost every time, while the greatest failures were attributed to the British, their explosive charges hitting almost exclusively civilian objectives, which we know now was not the case. An aspect worth mentioning is the fact that, despite the open antipathy shown by Romanian journalists against England, they did not refrain from expressing their admiration for the inhabitants of the British Isles and their resolution, some of the articles being truly appreciative.

### **The Battle of Britain Depicted in the Romanian Press (January –June 1941)**

Began on 10 July 1940, the Battle of Britain continued with almost the same level of intensity also in the second half of 1941, more precisely with March, because in January and February weather conditions weren't favourable for flights, fact that resulted in the instauration of a period of relative calm between the two combatants. In the spring of 1941, Hermann Göring realizing the vital importance of supplying Great Britain with working material, started to apply the so-called "tour of ports made by Luftwaffe". As a consequence, important cities of Great Britain were bombarded, which were also ports, amongst them being, of course, London.

Romanian press of the time recorded almost exclusively only the successes of German pilots, these being opposed to failures of British raids over Germany, which ended invariably in minor damages or only bombarding of some civilian targets. Information presented by Romanian journalists must not be taken into consideration *ad litteram*, as they took over information from German press, so that events were presented in a twisted manner. Moreover, there must not be forgotten that Romania was an ally of the Third Reich.

German air raid from 10/11 May was the last big air raid against Great Britain, because, Hitler, not being capable to defeat the resistance of the British, was slightly upset and, finally, not knowing how to act, just like Napoleon, planned a campaign in Russia. Its conquering was

perceived as a preliminary stage of the final battle with England. Thus, as July came, the Battle of Britain practically ended, even if sporadic attacks were still launched.

### **The Battle of Britain Reflected in the Legionary Media in Romania (September 1940-January 1941)**

The Battle of Britain, one of the most important and most dramatic fights of the Second World War, received an increased attention of media during the National-Legionary State. The article is based upon the research into three journals, *Buna Vestire*, *Cuvântul* and *Axa*, journals recognized, by an official announcement of the General Secretary, on December 19, 1940, as forming the Legionary media. Each edition of the above mentioned journals describes in detail the recent events of the Anglo-German conflict. Thus, easy to anticipate, the attitude of these journals was clearly Germanophile and, of course, Anglophobic, the deployment of the hostilities always being presented in a light favourable to Germany. The anti-British attitude of the Romanian media caused even a protest made by the Foreign Office Sub-Secretary of State, R.A. Buttler. The Legionary media was not short of direct attacks against England and against everything under British name, some passages being really caustic and vilifying. The anti-Semitic component of the Legionary Movement, its atavist aversion against Jews resulted in an enhancement of the hostility feelings, their transformation into hatred against the United Kingdom. Considering the Jew as the element of dissolution of any civilization, as a person manifesting a boundless selfishness and characterized ferocious materialism, and considering England one of the favourite places of universal Judaism, the three journals deemed the British islands, after the collapse of France, the last bastion of the Judeo-Masonry in Europe. The media during the National-Legionary State did not analyze the Anglo-German confrontation since its beginnings, for reasons ease to comprehend, and it did not detect the end of this combat, in order to record Germany's first major fiasco in the Second World War. However, the media succeeded in detecting the most dramatic moments of this combat, as well as the most important changes in strategy.

### **The Battle of the Atlantic as Reflected by the Romanian Press (January-June 1941)**

At the beginning of 1941, due to the failure of *Luftwaffe* to conquer the British archipelago by means of an exclusively aerial action, Germany adopted a new strategy to defeat the resistance of the islanders. The new tactics involved sinking British merchant ships, as well as bombing and blockading the main ports, an action which proved to be extremely dangerous, since Great Britain imported large quantities of raw materials necessary for its industry.

The Romanian press of the time covered with great interest this Anglo-German confrontation, though, as it was to be expected, the events were presented in a biased manner, exaggerating the losses of the Royal Navy and minimizing those of the Germans, since Romania had joined the Axis in the autumn of 1940. Moreover, the information regarding international occurrences generally came from the German news agency, *Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro*.

Laying mines in British ports, using long-range bombers, disguising warships as merchant vessels and, especially, grouping U-boats in the so-called "wolf packs" were only

some of the tactics used by the Germans so as to deprive British economy of the imported goods which were badly needed.

By means of good organizing, by creating a military facility in Iceland, but also due to the increasing support of the Americans, the British overcame all these difficulties starting with July 1941, even managing to turn German submarines from hunters into prey.

### **The Relationship between Great Britain and the Soviet Union as Reflected in Romanian Press in the Second Half of the Year 1941**

If previous to the German attack, the Soviet Union's attitude towards Great Britain was openly hostile, after 22 June 1941 the Soviet leaders asked for offers of help from England. Thus was laid the basis for the future successful alliance during WW II, in which a major role was to be played, later on, by the United States of America.

The Romanian press of the time closely watched the events and gave them significant coverage in both central and local newspapers. As Romania had become Germany's official ally half a year before and was now taking part in military action on the anti-soviet front, it is easy to anticipate that the articles written by Romanian journalists were critical against the alliance between Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

The British-Soviet agreement (signed in Moscow on 12 July, 1941), in which the two parties undertook to provide mutual support against Germany, was presented by the Romanian press both in articles written by Romanian journalists and in commentaries taken from the international press. Of course, the agreement was consistently criticized, since Romania was an ally of the Third Reich. The articles from international press came from countries such as Germany, Japan, Italy and Finland. Conspicuous by their harsh language, but also by the beauty of their style, were Pamfil Şeicaru's articles. Pamfil Şeicaru was owner and manager of *Curentul*, one of the most popular and incisive newspapers in Romania at the time. Şeicaru believed that there could not have been a more "unnatural" alliance, given the essential differences between Great Britain and the Soviet Union. In his articles, London was described as the centre of capitalism and the capital city of luxury and refinement, whereas Moscow appeared as the epitome of baseness and lack of finesse.

An important aspect of the British-Soviet relationship during the second half of the year 1941 was the attitude which the British government had to take towards Germany's satellites states (one of which was Romania) whose troops were fighting against the Soviet Union. For fear that Stalin might sign a treaty of peace unilaterally, Winston Churchill sent Romania an ultimatum, demanding an immediate ceasefire against the Soviet Union. If Romania did not comply, the British government threatened with a declaration of war.

If in November 1941 the most important Romanian newspapers mentioned Great Britain only occasionally, at the beginning of December, London's ultimatum and the subsequent declaration of war were given large coverage. Reference was made, once more, to the international press, but only from countries, which were Germany's allies.

In order to regain the territories lost during the summer of 1940 and to wipe away the humiliation of having lost them, Romania joined Germany in the anti-Soviet war. Thus, Romania found itself, unwillingly, at war with Great Britain. In spite of the attitude of the press – which could not contradict the state's official foreign policy – most Romanians thought that the war against Great Britain was absurd, and kept intact their admiration for England, hoping that victory would be on its side.

## Conclusions

An overview of the Romanian-British relations during 1936-1941 highlights that until 1938 the links between Great Britain and Romania had been mostly determined by economic and navigation-related collaborations or by the desire of both countries to protect the European peace, as well as maintaining the *status quo* established after the First World War. Nothing spectacular can be seen between 1936 and 1938, even if in the foreign policy of both countries significant attitude changes had happen since 1936.

1938 and 1939 are the years when there was a multiple collaboration between the two countries, a collaboration that existed in the twentieth century only during the Paris Peace Conference and that will not be possible until the fall of the communist regime from Romania, in 1989. If up to the Munich Conference, King Carol and the Romanian government considered France as the great power towards which Romania should focus its foreign policy, from that moment on a significant change happen. In the period between the end of 1938 and the middle of 1940, Great Britain, whose support was considered until then just an additional and desirable one to support France towards Romanian interests, was considered by the government in Bucharest as the only western state able to limit the revisionist ambitions of Germany and hence those of Hungary and Bulgaria.

It should be emphasized that the French were not the ones who have reacted to the excessive increase of the German power in Central and Eastern Europe, but the British, though until the eve of the Second World War Great Britain, unlike France, had no political obligation towards the central or east European states.

The closeness of Romania towards Germany, developed in the second half of 1940, led to a cooling of the Romanian-British relations, hence leading to the closure of the Romanian Diplomatic Office in London as well as the British Diplomatic Office in Bucharest. On December 7, 1941, while the Romanian army was fighting on the Eastern Front against the Soviet Union, after a British ultimatum, the state of war between Great Britain and Romania was instituted and this was a premiere.



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