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**Considerations on the Romanian-Soviet Historical Diplomatic Relations in
the View of Nicolae Titulescu**

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Abstract: The paper seeks a reassessment of the analysis on the model of Romania's foreign policy in the view of Nicolae Titulescu, with a particular emphasis on the Romanian-Soviet relations during the period when Titulescu was the chief of the Romanian diplomacy. The local historiographical literature has generally increased, the theoretical value of Titulescu's thinking, mentioning rarely about his utopian elements, was too focused on legal constructs, to the detriment of pragmatic realism and historical background. Our concerns in this regard were illustrated in some texts and specialized volumes on the geopolitical implications of the Romanian-Soviet relations, and this paper is intended to be a synthesis typical for a process of nuancing regarding the action of a reference personality of the contemporary Romanian diplomacy.

Keywords: Nicolae Titulescu; Romania; USSR; collective security; negotiation; treaty

The foreign policy of Romania's inter-war period was represented (especially if we consider the period from 20 October 1932 to 29 August 1936) by Nicolae Titulescu, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he had previously held this position between July 6, 1927 -30 July 1928.

The complex and simultaneously contradictory personality of Nicolae Titulescu has been the subject of numerous articles, studies and books. The absolute majority of the Romanian historians consider that Titulescu is an exceptional diplomat, probably the most brilliant foreign minister that Romania has ever had. His undeniable intelligence, vast culture, oratorical grace, poise and spontaneity were his main strengths. At the same time, the man had his quirks, which some contemporaries did not hesitate to record them: exceedingly difficult, excessive spender with the ministry funds which he was leading, misbehavior, often arrogant...

The brilliance of his public statements was sometimes overshadowed by certain haste for choosing solutions, which some observers of the political life have sanctioned them harshly.

We aim in the current analysis an approach of Titulescu's vision on the diplomatic relations between Romania and the USSR, a controversial and important subject, equally adapted to the economic, historical or geopolitical paradigm.

In 1924, referring to Romania's relations with the USSR, Nicolae Titulescu considered that between the two countries it would have been a real friendship, and it ought to be maintained further identifying that goal with a profession of faith of his mission as a diplomat.

Unquestionably, the humanist, tolerant spirit, relaxed in this Titulescu's conviction can only honor if, historically speaking, the reference on the traditions of the Romanian-Russian

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relations would not be definitely forced. It is true the assertion that, in diplomatic terms, the Romanians and Russians were never until that moment at war, but it is surprising that an intellectually informed person such as Titulescu ignores a multitude of historical facts, demonstrating how nefarious was the Romanians' neighboring with the great Eastern power. It is true, the diplomacy pragmatism and the need to establish a lasting peace can be important arguments supporting Titulescu's declaration, more so as it would be absurd for Romania to maintain a state of perpetual hostility to its borders with Russia.

Nicolae Titulescu seemed for some to be overly optimistic and much too confident in this "friendship" between Romania and the USSR, considering that the duplicity and the unpredictability of Moscow's diplomacy were no longer a secret. It should have had maybe an extra backup in his statements that the temperamental structure of the Romanian diplomat did not allow it... In the summer of 1932, Nicoale Titulescu took over the actual issues related to a possible signing of a nonaggression pact between Romania and the USSR, leading to many negotiations in Paris and Geneva. He wanted to find a formula to eliminate from its contents the reference to any possible litigation between the Romanians and Soviets, while contributing to protecting the security of the eastern border of Romania. He rejected from the start the idea of introducing the Romanian-Soviet territorial litigation, considering that the part that admits a dispute over a territory, it will implicitly recognize its obligation to provide a solution to the dispute in question, this equating to either arbitration or to a plebiscite - both being unacceptable from the point of view of the Romanian diplomacy.

Even if the USSR was trying to reassure Bucharest sustaining that the acceptance of a territorial dispute between the two parties was not a tragedy, being able to be solved in time, amicably, it could not trusted the word of Moscow, which concealed the same diplomatic duplicity as always: the danger of an unpredictable armed conflict remained obvious, and only the very naïve or malicious would not have noticed it.

An elementary diplomatic principle states that between a small country and a great power, in order for any litigation to be solved amicably, it must be recognized equally by both parties. In his new quality as head of the State and of Romanian diplomacy, Titulescu had won certain sympathy from his Soviet counterparts – a new occasion to criticism, especially from the extreme right circles in Romania. The Soviets considered him as being a modern and constructive spirit, a partner in discussions without ideological prejudices and much more flexible (from their point of view) than his predecessors. (Titulescu, 1967, p. 283)

On the other hand, in February 1933 since the proposals on the definition of aggression showed a Soviet diplomacy ruling for respecting the existing treaties, the Balkan states began to regard the political actions of the Soviet Union with great interest. France, which ended in 1932 a non-aggression treaty with the USSR, wanted as its allies (including Romania) to get closer politically-diplomatically to this state. A particular aspect was represented by the report that Titulescu had with his Soviet counterpart Maxim Litvinov. Initially opponents in their ideas, engaging in numerous controversies in their official meetings, the two ended up in sincerely appreciating each other, primarily in terms of individual professional value. (Sandache, 2007, p. 283)

Defining the aggression and territory was one of the concerns of the inter-wars European diplomacy. Titulescu meant by territory, an area over which the state actually exercises its authority. (Oprea, 1966, p. 209)

The Romanian diplomat was convinced (for some - incomprehensible) that the definition of aggression would be the equivalent to a diplomatic panacea, meaning that the idea of peace

will come naturally it will arise and generate effective insurance of peace and implicitly the European equilibrium. (Oprea, 1966, p. 211)

Nicolae Iorga noticed that the diplomatic and conceptual scaffolding that argued the idea of defining aggression was purely a legal one, insufficient to ensure effective international security (Sandache, 2007, p. 283)

Titulescu's opponents have criticized him that he was seduced by the legal niceties at the expense of realism and pragmatism and, not least, he would be totally ignoring the historical records regarding the Romanian-Russian relations.

On the other hand, Titulescu opined that the main threat to European peace would be represented by the Nazism, which once came to power in Germany, it would have accelerated the revisionist side of the foreign policy of this country. According to Nicolae Titulescu as long as the Soviet diplomacy would be in favor of maintaining peace and the European equilibrium, it was imperative for the USSR to be drawn into the system of collective security, whose main pivot was represented by France. Moreover, Titulescu, a trained French intellectual, actually loved France, which he considered, in some way, the second home to him. His almost mystical faith that Titulescu had in forming a European system of collective security that includes the USSR and Romania, a system able to successfully oppose any form of virtual aggression, was in essence an issue of a certain moral beauty, but the ethical side of the vision sometimes turns into utopia. Although after 1919 Romania was attached to the idea of collective security, this principle very broad, with a universalistic interpretation at first sight, illustrating primarily the Franco-British interests. As Eduard Benes or Nicolas Politis also Nicolae Titulescu relied heavily on the French card, risking a relatively one-sided and ineffective vision. From a certain point of view, Titulescu can be compared to North American President Woodrow Wilson, who tried to put into the diplomatic practice the principles of modern Christianity, specific to Presbyterianism, the Puritanism of the chair. The head of Romanian diplomacy admitted that, in economic terms, the Members of the Little Entente were rather motivations of guidance towards Germany, but starting from the idea that France is the only antirevisionist European factor resulted in a high-power, advocating a primacy of politics over the economics. Unlocking the deeper springs of this profession of diplomatic faith we can detect an obvious predominance of the idealistic paradigm theorizing, to the detriment of real-politik, of the conjectural compromise, having a pragmatic feature. Not even the structure of Titulescu's personality was showing favorable to such attitudes, which undoubtedly were counted as being petty. It is noted here also a secret taste for the exterior, for gender representation at macro scale, typical to personalities holding an exacerbated pride.

In professional terms the Titulescu's diplomacy was actually an extension of the French legal system, as the American historian Walter M. Bacon Jr. would notice. (Bacon Jr., 1999, passim)

Positioning above all principles of legality and law, The Titulescu's diplomatic vision would later become somewhat anachronistic in the sense of theorizing itself, impeccable as intent, but subject to amendment practically. After 1920 this kind of approach to international relations no longer finds its viability being reflected in the 1936 dismissal of the Foreign Minister of Romania.

Nicolae Titulescu believed continuously in the indivisible peace organization, but it corresponded to a mentality point form end of 19th century and early 20th century which subsequently acquired the data of utopia. As a theoretical proposal, the Titulescu's diplomat

model represented a brilliant doctrine experiment, having the feature of a poorly run project which failed, 1940 being significant in this respect.

Romania has not monitored anymore with the same pragmatic care the European context that was set during the 1920-1940 period. It was too late to take account only the effects of the rise of Germany. As it regards Nicolae Titulescu we should note a paradox: at a certain point in time he two held positions at the same time, namely: Romania's foreign minister and president of the Society of Nations.

Although in the latter quality it was almost natural and advisable to vehemently criticize Italy for the Ethiopian adventure of 1935, thus supporting indirectly France, the dignity of Foreign Minister of Romania had to adapt to the diplomatic coordinates i.e. an attitude closer to pragmatism.

The Titulescu's model has reunited these plans into a single line of action, which marked spectacular vigilante-ethical events, specific rather to the diplomacy of a great power. We do not overlook the fact that in military terms, despite some accumulations that should not be ignored, Romania was mediocre. King Charles IInd recognized it. Such an ambitious and idealistic policy needed covering of an appropriate military force. Without reducing the blame of the 1940 tragedy to the results of foreign policy coordinated by Nicolae Titulescu for four years or to the international plot of the totalitarianism which associated, we must note that a in a pertinent historical analysis it needs to be taken into account absolutely all the existing factors, from the registered inter-conditions resulting in situations that can be interpreted as having special meanings.

In May 1934 in France there were discussions between Titulescu and Litvinov, the dominant atmosphere being relaxed and optimistic. On that occasion, the two diplomats had finalized the agreement in principle on resuming diplomatic relations between the USSR and Romania, Litvinov recognizing the sovereignty of the Romanian state. On 9 June 1934, the Romanian-Soviet diplomatic relations were resumed. Titulescu was convinced that this event would lead implicitly to the Soviet's recognition of Bessarabia within the borders of Romania. (Sturdza, 1994, p. 82)

The Titulescu's enthusiasm was the highest in that context, being convinced that he had obtained an exceptional diplomatic success that would forever normalize the relations between Romanians and Soviets (Titulescu, 1967, p. 601)

Excellent in terms of building effective propagandistic images, the Soviet diplomacy was giving also the impression (by the position of Litvinov) that the USSR would fully engage in such a political-diplomatic endeavor, on behalf of a responsibility typical to a state eager become one of the international centers for the defense of peace and stability on the European continent (Sandache, 2007, p. 287)

We do not know what to admire first: refined cynicism of the Soviet side, excess demagogy, the bright exaggerations and equally implausible...

It surprises unpleasantly the Titulescu's excessive optimism, faith in the Soviet's good intentions, sometimes being friends with naivety. No doubt that, in terms of diplomat career, of being the knower of international relations specifics, with all its complicated alchemy, Titulescu was formally right. The argument of the historical experience in the relations between the USSR and Romania was played by the Romanian diplomacy head in a formal and conventional manner. Obviously between the Romanian and Russian it had never existed before a formal state of war, but most of the unfortunate examples of the multitude of contacts

between the two sides would have to make him more reserved and circumspect in the Romanian diplomat's statements. From where could there be a "friendship" between the Soviet state and the kingdom of Romania? The term was excessive and it seemed that Titulescu had taken into consideration of the tradition of some bilateral interstate relations exclusively analyzed in the light of his personal experiences summarized in the good dialogue with Maxim Litvinov. Titulescu was the Romanian chief diplomat and he was expressing the view of a state, and not an exclusively personal one. A certain reserve should have been imposed.

In the text of the railway Convention subsequently concluded by Romania with the USSR, the concepts of "borderline", the "borders", "customs", "border authority" were omitted.

An interesting aspect was represented by the offer made in October 1934 to Romania by Germany, in the sense that it took the obligation of guaranteeing all borders of Romania, both in the west and the east, proposing at the same time also the complete rearming of the Romanian army with the latest weaponry. Germany would have not imposed to Romania to leave its traditional alliances, but it claim to oppose any attempt to penetrate any Soviet troops on Romanian territory. Accepting such an offer would have blocked the military mutual assistance treaty which France was preparing with the USSR. Such a treaty would not have had any sense if the Soviet troops could not pass through the territories of Western neighbors. All the Western neighbors of the USSR (except Romania) refused to accept such a possibility. (Sturdza, 1994, p. 89)

On May 2nd, 1935 Mutual Assistance Treaty was signed between France and the USSR, a document which stated that the parties will give aid and assist each other in case one of them would become the subject of an unprovoked aggression from a European state. Both the USSR and France said that they want to militate in favor of the conclusion of a regional pact to form the core of collective security in Europe. In turn, Nicolae Titulescu participated in the drafting of the Soviet-French document, an aspect with which he will boast about later on. It is worth noting that the Romanian chief diplomat turned into an active supporter of initialing at the earliest such an act.

On February 27th, 1936, the French Parliament ratified the military alliance with the USSR, and in the night of 7 to 8 March, 1936, Richard Franasovici, the Romanian Minister of Public Works, ordered the government of Romanian Railways to focus as many transport wagons as possible at the border between USSR and Romania. In fact, they wanted to stimulate a possible transshipment of Soviet military equipment in case of a conflict, to Czechoslovakia. (Germany was on the eve of the occupation of the Rhineland). Basically, only Romania finally agreed to join the alliance between France and the USSR.

On July 14, 1936, located in France, Octavian Goga sent a letter to King Charles IInd, where among others he also criticized the obsession of our foreign policy called France, saying that the Popular Front government led by Leon Blum, had no way of abandoning its communist side. (Constantiniu, 2002, p. 333)

Titulescu did not want in any way to change his attitude, but he was trying to demonstrate to the government in Bucharest (and primarily, King Charles IInd) that in terms of poor logistical endowment in the Romanian army, the country would not have been able to resist a possible aggression by Nazi Germany itself – but it had to join a network of alliances with two representative pillars such as France, the USSR and Czechoslovakia. Titulescu's brilliant intelligence alternated in strange fixations of some interpretations, with disappointing haughty stiffness. The USSR was considered as the necessary element of European security, Titulescu

(as other Western diplomats otherwise) was convinced that only Germany was a real threat to the European peace. In July 1935 he received full authority to begin negotiating a pact of mutual assistance of Romania and the USSR, under rather complicated conditions, with a Romanian public opinion relatively divided, which have different perceptions of the USSR and of the idea of national security. Titulescu was of the opinion that the future pact would have represented a culmination of his diplomatic career and that he would achieve the old aspiration of the Romanian foreign policy, to forever ensure peace on the borders of the east, while the USSR would be waived of all claims on Bessarabia. In terms of writing it was merely a treaty of general assistance with a content rather ambiguous, with many general abstract formulations, where Romania seemed rather forced to help the Soviet side, than to enjoy a similar advantage. Titulescu's superficiality and strange trust in the good intentions of the USSR appear to have been the features of the future document. (Oprea, 1966, p. 272)

The details of the document became known in the political circles, not only in Romania, but also from Poland, Germany and Italy, generating more vehement criticism against Nicolae Titulescu, especially since the signing of the pact of Romanian-Soviet mutual assistance was made on July 21st, 1936 by Titulescu and Litvinov, the executive in Bucharest not knowing anything about this. Reaching in a moment of confusion, Titulescu tried to "get closer" in the last moment of Germany saying that, but after it was signed the pact of mutual assistance between Romania and the USSR, Romania was offering to Germany the conclusion of a similar pact, provided that Germany (as USSR) would guarantee the territorial integrity of both Romania and its allied countries. But it was too late for that, as Germany rejected the Titulescu's project. Meanwhile, in Romania, some politicians spoke out vehemently against the signing of a pact between Romania and the USSR. Among the most active critics of Titulescu and his policy were Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, A.C. Cuza, Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Octavian Goga, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Constantin Argetoianu. Finally, the Soviet-Romanian negotiations were halted. Titulescu suffered a failure, despite the ethical and legal principles that he thought he was protecting. Subsequent events showed the duplicity of the USSR, and that the principles of collective security remained rather legal texts without practical effect, amid the new European geopolitical changes.

In conclusion, we can say that in terms of theoretical scaffolding the Titulescu's concept proved to be almost flawless, representing today a recognized model of ethics, in the spirit of good ideas of international cooperation, the concept of "border spiritualization" is significant in this regard. But it was deficient in terms of estimated capacity of power relations dynamics.

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