

## ROMANIA AND THE USSR BETWEEN THE SPECTRE OF WAR AND DIPLOMACY IN THE EARLY 1930S

Museum Curator Valeria BĂLESCU, PhD

“King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum, Bucharest

DOI: 10.55535/RMT.2024.4.47

*In the early 1930s, Romania received – through various diplomatic channels – numerous alarming news about the warlike tendency of the USSR. In parallel with this, diametrically opposite news also arrived in our country, which announced the intention of the Soviet government to negotiate with the Romanian state in order to conclude a non-aggression pact. The present article outlines some of the directions employed in the mentioned process.*

*Keywords: Romania; USSR; non-aggression pact; negotiation; Balkan Bloc;*

### SOVIET PROPOSALS FOR A REGIONAL PACT THROUGH TÜRKIYE

In the 1930s, it was known that both Ismet Pasha, the prime minister of Türkiye, as well as Tevfik Rüşdü Bey, the Turkish foreign minister, had a pro-Soviet orientation (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/AMAE, file 80/1930, p. 189).

As far as Türkiye’s position towards the Romanian-Soviet relationship was concerned, in the first part of 1930 (8 April) a news from Budapest informed that Rüşdü Bey<sup>1</sup> had knowledge of Soviet concentrations on Romania’s eastern border and in the Black Sea basin, but he considered them to have only “*a demonstrative character*” (Ib., p. 192)<sup>2</sup>. Instead, he expressed his conviction that Soviet Russia would not give up “*reopening the Bessarabia question by any way and by any means, when the real situation would allow it to do so*”.

More worthy of consideration for the subject that concerns us was the information that came directly from Türkiye, on 30 May 1930, from the Romanian envoy to Ankara, I. P. Carp (Ib., pp. 256-257). Following his audience with Rüşdü Bey, the Romanian diplomat concluded that in the view of the Turkish minister there were “*three dangerous areas*” in Europe, “*generating conflict*” and from which Romania was not excluded. Among those he listed: 1.) Danzig corridor area; 2.) The border area between Russia, Poland and Romania; 3.) The border area of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Rüşdü Bey was of the opinion that “*to eliminate the possibility of armed conflicts in these*” areas, it would have been necessary “*to conclude non-aggression pacts of the type called <Litvinov>*”, based on the principles of the *Geneva Protocol*. They could contain, in addition and as an essential condition, “*the obligation for the contracting parties to cooperate in collective sanctions, in case of aggression by one of the contracting parties against another signatory state of the regional pact*”. Regarding the regional pact in the second zone, he added that it “*should be signed by the following states: Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Türkiye*”. The Turkish diplomat’s belief was that the conclusion of such a document

<sup>1</sup> Tevfik Rüşdü Bey (1883-1972) was the foreign minister of Türkiye between 1925 and 1938.

<sup>2</sup> The news was transmitted by the Romanian minister from the Hungarian capital, Vasile Grigorcea, following discussions with his Hungarian counterpart from Angora, namely Minister Lajos Walko (1880-1954) – Hungarian politician and diplomat, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary (during: 1925- 1930; 1931-1932), on the occasion of his return to his homeland (A.N.).

should be *“the first step in the work of pacification in this area”*, and, after that, it would be necessary to proceed to *“remove points of friction, especially the issue of Bessarabia”*. Rüşdü Bey thought that *“recognition of Russia of the incorporation of Bessarabia (to Romania) could be obtained through compensations”*. In this sense, he assumed the obligation for Türkiye to play the *“mediator role”* between Romania and the USSR, but not alone, and only alongside Czechoslovakia. The Turkish minister also promised to start such negotiations *“as soon as he finishes with Greece”* (Turkish-Greek negotiations were to follow), and that then he would *“concentrate all his efforts”* on the problem that he saw happening in three phases: 1.) the resumption of diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia; 2.) the conclusion of the regional pact including the five signatory states; 3.) the Turkish-Czechoslovak action to eliminate the question of Bessarabia (Ib., p. 257).

About this Turkish project, the French ambassador in Istanbul, Count Chambrun<sup>3</sup>, expressed that it is not *“a too fertile imagination”*, but a *“chained ring of conventions”*, for Türkiye to consolidate its new national base. The idea of involving Czechoslovakia in the combination proposed by the Turks was not clear to Chambrun, because it was the country that did not have a common border with Russia. That is why he could not avoid the question: *“couldn’t there be a desire to dislodge, to some extent, the Little Entente?”*, a tendency behind which he suggested that Italy could have been (Ib., pp. 277-278)<sup>4</sup>. Mussolini’s policy of isolating Yugoslavia at the time was obvious. Under his auspices, the Greek-Turkish convention was concluded. It was foreseen, also under the auspices of Italy, a *“Greek-Turkish pact of conciliation and arbitration, just like those concluded with Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary, then a naval arrangement and perhaps a Balkan pact, from which Yugoslavia would remain excluded”* (Ib., p. 279). Then, a regional pact would have followed on the Russian front, through the inclusion of Czechoslovakia and Romania, *“dislocating into several Little Entente”*. In fact, in connection with this, Count Chambrun had confessed to the Romanian envoy in Ankara that Tevfik had basically told him about six countries, he did not clearly remember one, but, apparently, he was thinking of Hungary. His opinion was supported by *“a symptomatic detail”*, observed at the banquet given by Türkiye at the Ankara Palace, following the Greek-Turkish convention, where they had been invited – apart from the Italian ambassador to Ankara – and the Russian ambassador, Souritz, as well as that of Hungary, Tahy.

<sup>3</sup> Count Louis Charles Pineton de Chambrun (1875-1952) was a French diplomat and writer. From 1928 to 1933, he represented France in Ankara and then became ambassador in Rome from 1933 to 1935.

<sup>4</sup> According to the telegram of the Minister of Affairs from Ankara, following no. 655/30 May 1930.

About Tevfik Rüşdü Bey and his claims as a skilled diplomat, Dimitrie I. Ghica<sup>5</sup>, also informed, on 29 August 1930. He was talking about an interview given by Rüşdü Bey to the Soviet Agency *“TASS”* (taken over by the international press), which had produced *“something of a stir”*, because the Turkish diplomat had let it be understood that *“between Italy and Russia, Türkiye would be a co-signatory of a secret agreement of a political nature”* (Ib., p. 380). In fact, from the statement made, apart from the political interest that aroused him in a possible agreement, one could once again draw the conclusion that the Turkish foreign minister wanted to show the importance of Türkiye as a great power, on an equal footing with Russia and Italy, and, hence, his claim to influence in international politics.

And regarding the rumours of a Soviet attack on Romania, Ghica also conveyed the opinions of some secretaries of the Bolshevik embassy in Ankara, who accused *“in a fiery tone, through indignation and alcohol”* the nationalist circles in Germany for starting a *“campaign to propagate the aggression against Romania, in order to hamper the action of the Soviets to buy foreign currencies in order to implement the famous five-year industrial and agrarian plan”*. And following Rüşdü Bey’s visit to the USSR, in October 1930, the same Romanian diplomat informed that, apart from the *“favourable”* (Ib., p. 346)<sup>6</sup> impression that the Turkish minister had made towards the country of the Soviets, as well as his delight in the *“intimacy”* of the Turkish-Soviet relations, with regard to Romania (Bessarabia), the head of Turkish diplomacy returned to the idea of a regional pact, which could have been concluded on the basis of the Litvinov Pact, but supplemented *“by applying the principles of the Geneva Protocol”* (Ib., pp. 445-446)<sup>7</sup>. Following that information, the impression of the Romanian diplomat was that Rüşdü Bey advocated *“regional pacts, conciliation, arbitration and neutrality treaties, to the detriment of alliances”*. In this sense, he gave the example of the alliance between France and Yugoslavia, which led Italy to seek *“a counterbalance to this threatening force”*, thus grouping around it other states such as: Hungary, Bulgaria, Austria, whose Anschluss with Germany *“will admit if necessary”*, apart from any other solution.

<sup>5</sup> Dimitrie I. Ghica (1875-1967), during that period he was sent extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Rome (1928-1931), after which he was minister of foreign affairs between 27 August 1931-5 June 1932.

<sup>6</sup> Carp reported, on 10 October 1930, that industrialization was on the rise, that there were 400,000 workers in all branches, that the technical leaders were American and German, that they had travelled to the Black Sea on a new diesel engine ship built in the Leningrad shipyards; that the trains were running well and that, in general, the state’s economy was progressing, although the standard of living was low.

<sup>7</sup> Communication by telegram no. 1552/17 October 1930, following telegram no. 1503 of 13 October 1930. After presenting the letters of accreditation to the President of the Republic, the Romanian Minister continued the conversation on the same topic with the Minister of Foreign Affairs from Türkiye.



Litvinov in Türkiye, October 1931, with Rüstü Aras  
(<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Litvinov...jpg>)

On the other hand, during the meeting with I.P. Carp, Tevfik Rüşdü Bey emphasized the fact that Türkiye *“has a vital interest in ensuring peace between Russia and the neighbouring states, Poland and Romania”*. And because he was convinced that Czechoslovakia had the same interest, he insisted on the opinion that the two states *“could usefully play a conciliatory role”* between Romania and Russia. However, for it to materialize, according to the *“Rüşdü Bey”* scenario, it would be first necessary for Czechoslovakia to enter into normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and secondly, for Romania to show its willingness to *“offer Russia compensation for Bessarabia”*.

To the Romanian diplomat's question: *“What kind of compensations (?)”*, because he eliminated the territorial ones, considering that Bessarabia was *“a well-defined territory, of which no part can be ceded”*, and, also, *“giving up the treasury of the National Bank”* was out of the question, Tevfik replied *“that he has no idea either, but that the solution to the problem must be sought and found in this direction”*. Moreover, the Turkish diplomat had expressed his clear conviction that *“the Russian government cannot give up Bessarabia without compensation, because it would create a precedent, after which it would have to give up all its other territorial claims”*. He was referring to the Baltic States. To be even more convincing, the Turkish minister added: *“No one can deny that the Soviet Union*

*is making amazing progress, especially as a military and industrial Power, and that the resumption of diplomatic relations with such a Power is becoming an imperative necessity for all states that have so far shown refractory”*.

Conciliating, Carp accredited the position adopted by the Turkish foreign minister, because he had just returned from the USSR and he was *“deeply convinced that the Soviet regime would not only endure”* but that it had overcome the greatest difficulties, now entering the *“phase of final consolidation”*, therefore his conclusion was that Türkiye's policy *“will therefore continue to be Russophile”*.

Rüşdü Bey seems to have taken seriously his role as a mediator between the USSR and the rest of the world, as Caius Brediceanu communicated from the Legation in Vienna, on 6 November 1930<sup>8</sup>. He reinforced his statement by a manifest gesture of Hamdi Bey, the Turkish envoy in the capital of Austria, on the occasion of the reception he had offered on the day of Türkiye. In that festive setting, the Turkish minister also introduced the Soviet ambassador Jurenew and his wife to the guests, which attracted the reaction of the other diplomats, who *“left the table and moved away (...), apart from the two high-ranking Austrian officials”*. The reaction of the diplomats – started at the initiative of the ambassadors from Switzerland and Hungary – was explained by the Romanian minister as follows: *“most of the foreign representatives here are indisposed to note that Hamdi Bey, the Turkish minister, is trying to patronize and introduce the Soviet representative into society, seeming to have instructions in this regard”*. Apart from it, Brediceanu reported that all the members of the diplomatic corps to whom the Russian minister was introduced, *“shake hands with him on occasion or even talk to him, but avoiding closer relations”*; and even if the representatives of the Powers that had diplomatic relations with Russia invited Jurenew, *“his situation in society remains (...) precarious”*.

In connection with *“an alleged mediation by Türkiye between Romania and the USSR”* also the envoy of Czechoslovakia to Ankara, Milos Kobr, asked minister Carp, on 12 November 1930 (Ib., pp. 475,477). The interrogation was related to the news that had reached him from Prague, following the discussions between his compatriot from Bucharest, Jizersky, with the Romanian diplomat Gheorghe Filality<sup>9</sup>, *“that Türkiye had proposed to Romania its mediation in the Bessarabia issue”*. Carp denied the news and clarified his counterpart by telling him that Tevfik Rüşdü Bey had only presented him, on several occasions, *“his conceptions of a regional pact on the Russian front, but in a completely theoretical way, without any attempt of a concrete proposal”*, and that he transmitted all this in the country,

<sup>8</sup> Telegram no. 360.

<sup>9</sup> Gheorghe Filality (1864-1941), Romanian Minister at the Legation in Prague (Czechoslovakia).

avoiding, however, to express any personal opinion. Besides, Czechoslovak minister had revealed to him that he had also known about Rüşdü's plan, by virtue of which he had urged Beneş "to start negotiations for the resumption of normal diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia" (Ib., p. 476). Knowing all this, Kobr's conviction was that the attitude of the Turkish foreign minister only mattered to the extent that he wanted to appear "as a personality who plays an important role in Europe". Without contradicting him directly, the Romanian minister did not agree with his point of view, but believed that it was a sincere desire of Rüşdü "to see peace definitively ensured on the Russian front". What remained to be discussed, however, was whether his projects were the most effective.



15 October 1933, Ankara. Nicolae Titulescu, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, together with Tevfik Rüstü Aras, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs. The visit to Türkiye resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Non-aggression, Arbitration and Conciliation between Romania and Türkiye. In the picture, among others, are: Numan Menemencioglu, secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, Ion Dragu, deputy director of the Romanian Press Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Raicovicianu, Sergiu Nenişor and Dimitrie G. Buzdugan, personal secretaries of Nicolae Titulescu (<http://www.titulescu.eu /20/>)

Trying to intuit the flow of information, Carp assumed that the news came from Rome, because Baron Aloisi (the Italian envoy to Ankara) had addressed him in the same sense. With an air of advice, he told him that "Romania should resume normal relations with Russia, leaving the issue of Bessarabia to <sleep>". Carp replied: "we don't wake it up, because for us it doesn't even exist, only the leaders of Soviet politics always stir it up. That is why we cannot resume normal relations with the Union of Soviet Republics without formal recognition on its part of the territorial status quo".

The Romanian Government also denied the news, on 7 November 1930, through Minister Mironescu<sup>10</sup>, who declared the following to the press: "It was published that the Turkish Republic would have proposed its good offices to the Romanian Government, in order to reach an agreement with a large neighbouring country. It is pure fantasy. We have the best relations with the Turkish Republic, but it was never about its friendly intervention between Romania and another country" (Ib., p. 477).

However, Rüşdü Bey revealed the same ideas in Geneva, on 28 November 1930 (Ib., ff. 259v, 482, 483)<sup>11</sup>, in front of Antoniadē<sup>12</sup>, the Romanian minister delegated to the League of Nations. Without detours, the Turkish diplomat had expressed his desire to reach the "establishment of a Balkan block", which would include Türkiye, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria, but only under certain conditions. Among them he listed:

- the definitive rapprochement between Türkiye and Greece, which, according to his own expression, "is as if accomplished following the conclusion of the last treaties between these two republics";
- the solidity of the Balkan block – for which it was necessary that "each of the countries that will compose it erase any divergences not only between themselves, but also the other more serious ones with their other neighbours";
- regarding Romania, Rüşdü Bey believed that the agreement with Bulgaria was "the easiest"; "harder" but not impossible, was the one "with Hungary and the Soviets". And if, according to his opinion, in Hungary "the resistance can be cancelled with time, the question of the Soviets remained". Regarding their latter, Rüşdü Bey, through "veiled words", as the Romanian minister further recorded, had let it be understood that during his last visit to Moscow he had made some suggestions about Poland and Romania, which the Soviets "received favourably". And it would have been possible if it had been included in a wider agreement, which would even include mutual guarantees, in which "Türkiye, the Soviets, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania would enter". Under those conditions, the Turkish minister insisted that the Soviets would have been willing to recognize the possession of Bessarabia, "not a direct recognition of the treaty of 1920, he added, to which the Soviets could not be willing, they believe, without losing their prestige, but an implicit recognition, with the addition of a clause in the future treaty that the border issues between the two States will be regularized by good understanding, or something similar"

<sup>10</sup> Gheorghe Mironescu (1874-1949) was president of the Council of Ministers of Romania in two stages: 7 June 1930 – 12 June 1930; 10 October 1930 – 17 April 1931.

<sup>11</sup> Telegram no. 74997/1930.

<sup>12</sup> Constantin Antoniadē (1880–1954) was a Romanian jurist, writer, historian, philosopher and diplomat of Greek ethnic origin; he was Romania's representative at the League of Nations between 1928-1936.

(Ib., p. 483). The Turkish diplomat also explained that *“the Soviets would consent to the possession of all of Bessarabia (by Romania - A.N.) and that this clause would only be intended to protect them from the accusation that they simply received the fait accompli, imposed by the Great Powers”*. Instead, Rüşdü Bey believed that *“we should also give up our claims on the treasure stored in Moscow”*.

For the materialization of his proposals, Rüşdü Bey conveyed to Antoniaide that he would come to Bucharest for diligence, but afterwards he declined his self-invitation (Ib., p. 260)<sup>13</sup>.

Antoniaide, in his report, did not forget to add that the news received from the Turkish minister had already been known to him from the Romanian minister in Ankara, but, nevertheless, he had listened with deference to the *“nebulous exposition”* of Rüşdü Bey, or *“wilfully nebulous in some parts”*, without issuing any personal opinion. And he was, however, convinced that Rüşdü Bey wanted *“to offer his good offices as a mediator between Romania and the Soviets”* (Ib., p. 485).

Regarding the direct relations with the members of the Soviet delegation from the Preparatory Disarmament Commission, Antoniaide specified, regarding the above, that *“no direct approach was made towards our delegation”*. And according to the instructions from home, he recorded that he was always *“reserved and had no relations with the members of that delegation other than strictly protocol and courtesy, and these were kept to a minimum”*. Instead, he reported a change in the general attitude of the members of the Soviet delegation. Unlike the other time, Antoniaide remarked that they had shown themselves *“much more modest and conciliatory”*. They no longer came *“with extraordinary proposals, they no longer spoke, as they did at the previous sessions, for the audience and for propaganda, they no longer engaged in obstructionism and they no longer said impertinencies about the League of Nations or about the great <bourgeois> powers. They presented their points of view, but with enough modesty”*. The change of attitude of the Soviets had been noted *“by everyone”*, as had also been observed *“the growing concern of (their) leaders lately”*. It seems that the new change of attitude of the Soviets was due to the worsening of the internal situation in the Republic of Soviets, as some *“lesser”* Soviet delegates had confessed to their Genevan acquaintances. And at the moment when *“increasingly disturbing news began to trickle in from Soviet Russia (...), the first delegate, Litvinov, left Geneva”*.

Even towards the end of the same year (28 December 1930), after Geneva and the Litvinov-Grandi meeting in Milan, Tevfik had kept his views vis-à-vis Romanian-Soviet relations. In this sense, he told Minister Carp: *“In Milan, Mr. Litvinov*

*was reluctant”*, that is, he was not *“willing to negotiate on Bessarabia unless he saw a material or moral interest”*. As a result, Tevfik considered it necessary to consult with the Government in Moscow, but also with *“other governments”* (Ib., p. 260)<sup>14</sup> on this issue. On the other hand, Tevfik declared to Carp again, on 17 February 1931, that *“the issue of Bessarabia is for the Soviet Government exclusively a matter of prestige and that a formula could easily be found to manage these susceptibilities”* (Ib.)<sup>15</sup>. On the same occasion, the Turkish minister also expressed his concern about the rumour that Romania was strengthening its fleet, by buying warships from England, which would have caused *“the relocation of the Baltic (Soviet) fleet to Sevastopol”* and, thus, would have *“shaken the balance of forces”* not only in the Black Sea but also in the Mediterranean (Ib., file no 81/1931-1932, p. 34).

Tevfik's projects about the Balkan pact and the one on the Soviet front seemed to have been approved by France, as reported by the Romanian minister in Ankara, following the dialogue with his French counterpart, Count Chambrun. He opined that the French Government *“would not oppose”* any of the envisaged pacts, only on one condition, not to *“dislocate the Little Entente and, in general, the political system intended to maintain the territorial status established by the peace treaties”*. Or, Rüşdü Bey wanted to replace the alliances with the system of regional pacts.

*“These are, said Carp, two concepts diametrically opposed and difficult, but not impossible, to reconcile”* (Ib., p. 511)<sup>16</sup>. However, his opinion was that, as conceived by Rüşdü Bey, the regional pact on the Russian front did not necessarily mean the *“dislocation”* of the Little Entente, the purpose of which was: the stability of the territorial status quo vis-à-vis Hungary; nor the weakening of the alliance between Romania and Poland, because it could be included in the new pact, just as the alliance between France and Belgium was included in the Locarno Mutual Guarantee Pact. But he believed that *“the reconciliation and framing of both systems requires a thorough preparation”* and, therefore, Rüşdü Bey needed it.

Later, however, Rüşdü Bey's conception would materialize, at least in part, through the expected Balkan Pact signed on 9 February 1934, in Athens, between: Türkiye, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia.

<sup>14</sup> Carp thought it was about the Government in Rome, telegram no. 557/1931.

<sup>15</sup> See also telegram no. 13050/1931.

<sup>16</sup> Carp's telegram on 3 January 1931.

<sup>13</sup> Tevfik denies the news about a trip to Romania (telegram 1143/1931).



Photograph from the signing of some Military Protocols included in the Balkan Pact (NMM Heritage, "Albums" Collection, inventory no. A. 1641, p. 41).

### SOVIET PROPOSALS FOR A NON-AGGRESSION PACT THROUGH POLAND

Polish-Soviet relations had entered an *"acute phase"* since 26 April 1930, when a bomb dropped on the Soviet Legation in Warsaw, and the USSR accused the Polish Government of not having taken measures against *"known terrorist organizations (...), these being made up of White Russians and other foreign elements, who had enjoyed exceptional protection in Poland"* (Ib., p. 283)<sup>17</sup>. To them, were added the unfavourable comments from Moscow, about a *"future collaboration"* of a group of states against Russia, the interpretation that was given to the visits to Finland of the Polish Chief of Staff, of the Head of the Romanian Great General Staff, General Samsonovici, as well as of a French general.

However, in the last part of the year (2 October 1930), the special envoy of Romania in Warsaw, Alexandru Cretzianu<sup>18</sup>, also informed about some rumours related to possible Soviet-Romanian negotiations for the normalization of relations, through Czechoslovakia, which would displease Poland (Ib., file 80/1930, p. 431). And, surveying the terrain in the Polish capital (a discussion with a high-ranking Polish official from Foreign Affairs), he had found that *"such an approach would seriously displease our Polish allies"*, because *"this case would be foreseen*

<sup>17</sup> News from Athens, 1 July 1930, from Langa-Rășcanu.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandru Cretzianu (1895–1979), during the period we are referring to, was the country's representative at the Romanian Legation in Poland; after that he was appointed a member of the permanent delegation of Romania to the League of Nations (1930-1932).

*by the articles of the Treaty of Alliance"*. Through the resolution of 10 October 1930, the Romanian foreign minister gave clarifications to Warsaw, namely that there had been no negotiation, but only an understanding two years before, in the framework of a Conference of the Little Entente, where *"it was agreed that through that country to make a joint action"*, and since then nothing had been undertaken.

We find from the previously presented aspects that, in general, the representatives of Romania in the European capitals were equidistant in dealing with the sensitive issue we are presenting, thus bringing real services for their country, which was not exactly the case of the Romanian in charge of Affairs in Prague (appointed in 1928), Th. Emandi<sup>19</sup>. Over time, it seems that he had developed a real passion for Benes's political conceptions, regarding the resumption of diplomatic relations with the Soviets. He reflected this fact in the multitude and vastness of his reports (Ib., p. 431)<sup>20</sup> which, although important, were biased regarding Benes. Moreover, Emandi characterizes him as *"the only European personality who has real authority over the Soviets"* (AMAE, file 80/1930, p. 330).

The same happened through the report from the beginning of June 1930, when the Romanian foreign minister was warned not to be surprised *"by the future attitude of Benes"*, because he was *"badly impressed"* by the fact that the Romanian Government did not comply with the negotiations of 1928, the serious basis of which he had tried to arrange and from which the recognition of Bessarabia would have been *"undoubtedly resulted"* (Ib., f. 266). That is why Benes considered that *"he no longer has any commitment to us, being free to work on his own"* (Ib., p. 267). Insisting, Emandi added: *"There is no longer any doubt that the issue will be negotiated by Czechoslovakia, I had the honour to show you through my political reports that the current government combination (Romanian, A.N.) has two big problems to solve, namely: the economic issue and the relations with the Soviets"*. And, thinking that it was *"of the greatest interest for the country not to remain isolated"*, he recommended that, in the matter of negotiations with the USSR, should be *"closely bound to our two allies"*, because both being Slavs, like Russia, *"an elementary precaution (was) absolutely indispensable"*. Then, at another time, he stressed: *"It is no secret to anyone that there are insistences for Czechoslovakia to resume relations with Moscow. The foreign policy of the grouping of States*

<sup>19</sup> Theodor Emandi (1868-1942) was a Romanian diplomat and politician, of Greek origin. During the period we are talking about, he was Minister Plenipotentiary of Romania in Czechoslovakia (14 March 1928 – 15 December 1936). He remained in that post for more than four years, because N. Titulescu extended his appointment in Prague.

<sup>20</sup> See also reports from: 26 August 1930, pp. 308-336; 2 September 1930 (pp. 338-374); 2 September 1930 (p. 402); 13 September 1930 (p. 403); 5 September 1930 (p. 410); 2 December 1930 (p. 495) etc.

(Germany-Italy-Hungary) would of course profit if the states of the Little Entente, at odds over the Russian issue, would differentiate their points of view even more. The intermediary would be, who would think (?), Türkiye, which seeks to find the right moment, as the Turkish foreign minister has confessed. It is unnecessary to show how much goodwill Germany will show to these insistences" (Ib., p. 312).

With the obvious influence of the political environment in which he had been lived and less attentive to the real national interest, Th. Emandi, with regard to a protocol for the normalization of Romanian-Soviet relations, pointed: "the basis of negotiations would have been the agreement between the two, from which it would appear that Russia recognizes (the union of) Bessarabia (with) Romania, renounces the treasury and any other claims. After this, it would have gathered the conference of four, which would have proceeded to organize the relations between the countries of the Little Entente and Russia" (Ib., p. 316). It was, therefore, for the abandonment of the "reprehensible passivity" towards the Soviets and the change of tactics, in the sense of "no longer being satisfied with the freedom we imposed on ourselves in the Russian matter, because, wherever, isolation and loneliness are powerless" (Ib., p. 318). In such an idea, the Romanian minister in Prague thought that 1930 should be a positive year for Bessarabia, considering that, at the time, the Little Entente had consolidated and demonstrated its strength internationally (Ib., pp. 320-321). Admittedly, some of his opinions were indeed valid, but Benes was not as faithful to him as Emandi thought. He realized that fact by himself following an event that happened in August of the same year, which surprised and outraged the Romanian minister himself in equal measure. It was about Benes's meeting with the Romanian lawyer J. Th. Florescu, whom he knew during the exile in the First World War. The latter had come to Prague to participate in the International Congress of Criminal Law, on 25 August 1930. Then, following the meeting with Benes, he summarized the following conclusions to Emandi, regarding the involvement of the Czechoslovak foreign minister in the normalization of the relations of the Little Entente with the Soviets (and, obviously, as an intermediary between Romania and the USSR):

"1) That (Benes) is forced by the internal political situation to resume political relations with the Soviets by himself, he is free to do so, because he has reserved this freedom;

2) That currently he does not take them together with Romania, because it is more difficult than in 1928, when the Soviets demanded a plebiscite;

3) That for the time being he will only sign a Trade Convention with the Soviets;

4) That it is necessary to prepare the public opinion in the two states because, in any case, Czechoslovakia will remain a good friend of Romania from now on" (Ib., p. 374).

Upon learning it, Emandi was amazed that Benes had discussed "categorical facts" with Florescu, "which, he says, during the morning he avoided".

Leaving aside the particularities of the character of the Romanian minister from Prague, through those presented we tried to illustrate the fact that, indirectly, through various diplomatic ways, Romania was pressured by the USSR for the resumption of diplomatic relations in the terms imposed by it. On the other hand, it did not deny its status as a state promoter of the world revolution, for the purpose of which it was not afraid to attack the national security of the targeted state, in this case of the Romanian one. At the time, that fact was also highlighted by the Polish press, more precisely by the Krakow newspaper "Czas" (no. 249/29 October 1930), through the article *Attack against Romania* (Ib., p. 466)<sup>21</sup>.

The publication revealed that Poland and Romania were considered by the Soviets to be key points in the realization of their plans to penetrate the western border for the spread of communism to the West, with the mention that Romania was the preferred target for a "flank" offensive. The motivation for such a hypothesis was related to a case of espionage discovered in Romania in 1930, which was considered "one of the biggest ... since the war". "Good specialists" had thus been recruited, through which they had managed to "penetrate even the high spheres of the Romanian security service", in order to learn important military secrets. Those aimed particularly the Polish-Romanian military convention and the exchange of views between Marshal Pilsudski and the Romanian Government (Ib., pp. 467-469). However, the plot being discovered in time, Romanian-Polish military relations could not be compromised, remaining even further to defend their important interest of "maintaining common security vis-à-vis the neighbour" in the east.

From the mentioned article, of interest for Romania were those aspects highlighted in the official sources and which referred to a war against Europe, especially through the neutralization of the Polish-Romanian alliance. The Polish official explained that the expected Soviet attack "would not be done to rob Poland of a piece of land or (not only) to install a Soviet government in one of the neighbouring countries", but also to create "over the neighbouring territories a way into the centre of Europe, into Germany and the Danubian countries, exploiting the political and economic ferments that exist there, and to bring about, with the help of the local Communists and perhaps even Hitler's partisans, a great social and economic revolution, with a word, to set Europe on fire". But, because the experience of 1920 had shattered the Soviet hopes of a "lightning" passage through Poland, the USSR became more circumspect. And because the Soviets realized that the fight

<sup>21</sup> Article sent to Mironescu, on 1 November 1930, by the Romanian consul from Lwow (George Gallin).

with Poland could take a long time, they reoriented their strategic plan to conquer the west. Through the new vision, they had two possibilities: either to bypass Poland to the north, or to the south. And because the road through the Baltic States was considered, from a military point of view, *“quite risky and not very promising”*, then the southern route was more attractive, i.e. passing through Romania, more precisely through the area between Romania and Poland. The Soviets considered that the weakest point of the front from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea was the sector between the Prut and Dniester, located on the line Kamenets-Podolsky-Cernauti-Kuty, where the Polish-Romanian territory comprised a narrow area of 150 km, with a single railway line between Poland and Romania. Their plan was to *“invade this area with strong forces”*, to separate Poland from Romania and penetrate into Subcarpathian Russia, *“undermined by the Bolsheviks and Russian agitations”*. From there they could then easily follow their path to Czechoslovakia and Hungary, making their way to Vienna. It was defined as a plan *“worthy of today’s Napoleons of the Soviet army, who dream of a march to the Danube and to the Rhine”*. And in accordance with the geography of the place, it was considered *“that such a strike will have to take place especially on the Romanian territory, and not on the Polish one, which presents more difficulties in Eastern Galicia, thus exposing the Soviets to greater risks”*. Through such an intervention, it was sought to separate the Romanian army from the Polish one and, further, destroy the Romanian one or throw it to the south. In establishing such a plan, the Soviets had considered that Romania was *“a weaker enemy”* than Poland. The idea was that, once a weak enemy was out of the game, they could then more easily defeat the stronger, but isolated enemy. And the case of espionage caught on Romanian territory revealed precisely that *“offensive of Soviet espionage in Romania”*. That is why Romania was warned to prepare, to eradicate cases of espionage and to achieve *“a strong and careful control not only on the professional value of the people who deal with responsible activities, but also on their moral value”*, indispensable for *“maintaining an atmosphere of safety and trust not only in the country but also in the allied states”*. The last point was emphasized knowing that *“for several years”*, Romania was going *“through a heavy internal political crisis”*, which was hoped to end along with the return of Carol II. Added to it was the extremely precarious economic situation, being the period of the world economic crisis, which caused the *“murmurs of the exhausted and indebted rural population”*, a situation precisely on which the *“hopes of the communist subversive elements”*, who sought the *“destruction of power”* and *“even of Romania’s independence”*. Knowing all those things, through appropriate measures, it was hoped to thwart the Soviet plan to set Europe on fire, concluded the Polish publication.

If that was how things were in the subsidiary, officially, less than a month after the above news, the USSR made a proposal to Poland for the conclusion of a Pact of non-aggression and neutrality, as informed by the Romanian envoy from Warsaw, on 19 December 1930 (Ib., p. 260v)<sup>22</sup>. It was not a new approach, but a renewal of the one in 1928, by which the Soviet Power wanted to conclude a pact that *“stimulates the obligation for each of the contracting parties not to be part of any alliance directed against the other contracting party, in the event that one of the signatory powers would be attacked without provocation on its part”*. Additionally, the USSR also wanted a commercial convention.

In order to accept the proposal, the Polish Government had set three conditions:

1. To be presented simultaneously to Romania and the Baltic States;
2. The provisions of the pact *“not to prejudice the obligations of the contracting states arising from the treaties and, in particular, towards the Covenant of the League of Nations”*;
3. At the same time, a *“conciliation and arbitration”* commission should be created. As far as the commercial convention was concerned, the Polish Government considered that it might be necessary to provide for the most-favoured-nation clause, which might be harmful, but its consideration should not, however, form an insurmountable obstacle to political negotiations.

Poland brought the Soviet proposal to the attention of the Romanian Government and the Baltic States, recommending, at the same time, that the commercial negotiations should be *“skilfully procrastinated”* until a result was reached regarding the non-aggression pact (Ib., file no. 81/1931-1932, p. 25)<sup>23</sup>.

Especially, as far as Romania was concerned, before giving the final answer to the Soviets, the Polish Government considered it *“absolutely necessary”* that the formalities for the extension of the Romanian-Polish alliance treaty, which expired on 26 March 1931 (Ib.)<sup>24</sup>, should start up to 1 January, so that the ratification would take place no later than 20 January 1931. Poland wanted to that time *“to stipulate the extension by renewal”* (Ib., file no. 80/1930, p. 500).

The Romanian government showed its willingness to accept all the proposals and suggestions of the Polish ally, on 22 December 1930, with only one inconvenience, that of operativeness, because Minister Mironescu was out of the country for 15 days (Ib., p. 501). Then, the negotiations seemed to follow their normal course, but *“a regrettable press indiscretion occasioned a denial by the agency <TASS>,”*

<sup>22</sup> See also telegram no. 78971/1930.

<sup>23</sup> Letonia, see the Riga report of the Romanian Legation, dated 2 January 1931.

<sup>24</sup> Memoir on the consequences of the indiscretion made by the *“Lupta”* newspaper, relative to the Polish-Soviet negotiations (pp. 24-28).

which denied the existence of the negotiations” (*Le Temps*, 7 January 1931). The “indiscretion” appeared under the signature L. Artemie (AMAE, file no. 81/1931-1932, p. 25), in the newspaper “*Lufta*”, on 4 January 1931, therefore, before the start of the negotiations for the extension of the Romanian-Polish guarantee treaty, and recorded both the propositions, the Soviet one, and Poland’s response, with the mention that the news had been found out “accidentally”, “from a good diplomatic source from abroad”.



The “indiscretion” of the article in the *Lufta* newspaper, dated 4 January 1931 (AMAE, collection 71, 1920-1944, USSR, volume no. 81/1931-1932, p. 3.)

The indiscretion caused “the most vivid and justified surprise” in Warsaw, and the Polish foreign minister, Zaleski, declared that “under such conditions it will be very difficult for him to make any more communication of the nature in question”. The consequences were that the Polish-Soviet negotiations were interrupted, and the Moscow Government provided a disclaimer, through the “TASS” agency,

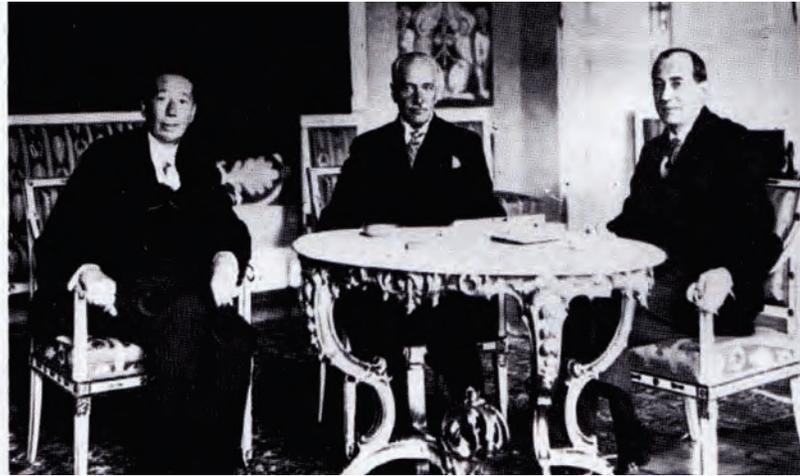
which clearly meant that the Soviets intended to withdraw the proposal made. The incident was not insignificant, especially for the Government in Warsaw. It had been put in a rather delicate position vis-à-vis Moscow, because it demonstrated that it was keeping Bucharest informed of the confidential negotiations it was conducting with the USSR. Minister Mironescu also expressed his indignation at what happened, through the telegram of 8 January 1931, in which he expressed that “the indiscretion (...) prevented for a time, which may be long, the relaxation that had been prepared to the East. All the diplomatic action that we started is now thwarted. Russia reacted and we can expect it to officially withdraw its proposal these days” (ib., p. 26).

For Romania, the incident was even more harmful, all the more so since, in Ankara, the USSR ambassador in Türkiye, Suritz, in the conversations he had with his Polish counterpart, had shown himself eager for a rapprochement of Soviet Russia with Romania and Poland, in order to “conclude a pact by which, implicitly, the annexation of Bessarabia would be recognized” (ib., file no. 80/1939, p. 360)<sup>25</sup>. He said that the new pact would be a development of the “Litvinov” Pact, by adding some guarantees, which “would not oblige the signatories to military cooperation with the attacked State against the aggressor State”, but only to preserve neutrality: military cooperation would not be than optional.

But the above wording was not accepted by the Polish Government, in order to manage the susceptibility of the Soviets, who would be *sur le qui-vive* (on the alert) as a result of the “indiscretion”. Nevertheless, Poland was still willing to continue the negotiations, for which the Polish minister from Moscow, Patek, arrived in Warsaw, on 17 February 1931, to establish a “detailed program for conversations with the Soviet Government”, following his proposal for conclusion of the Non-aggression Pact. It was estimated that in this way the Soviets wanted to “create a new argument against the so-called Russian clause of art. 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, with a view to the Conference on Disarmament, an argument that could have a great propaganda value” (ib., file no. 80/1930, p. 261)<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> See also telegram no. 1143/1931.

<sup>26</sup> From the Warsaw Legation, telegram no. 9712/1931.



Warsaw, October 1933. On an official visit to Poland, Nicolae Titulescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, is received by the President of Poland, Ignacy Moscicki, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Josef Beck (N. Titulescu, *Politica externă a României/Romania's foreign policy* (1937), George Potra, Constantin I. Turcu, Ion M. Oprea (eds.), Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1994).

As for the attitude of the Baltic States, although they were in principle “*favourable to an anti-Soviet bourgeois bloc*”, it was believed that, due to the state of economic crisis they were going through, they could be attracted to Russia, through economic proposals aimed at easing their economic situation<sup>27</sup>. The bilateral commitments of the Baltic States with the USSR had already caused Poland to declare that it would never accede to the Protocol of the new Pact, even though Poland had undertaken to submit it to the attention of the Foreign Ministers of Latvia and Estonia. In such a situation, “*one could no longer count with the same certainty on the continuation of the solidarity of the neighbouring countries with Russia*”, because only the Governments of Bucharest and Warsaw remained in discussion, to “*invoke the exception of the Soviet neighbourhood*” (AMAE, *ib.*, file no. 80/1930, p. 261v)<sup>28</sup> at the Disarmament Conference. It was, thus, an obvious diplomatic victory for the Soviets, obtained following the economic pressure in the Baltic States, as a result of the dumping policy.

<sup>27</sup> The Romanian Legation in Riga, on 20 March 1931, reported that the Soviet proposal to Latvia and Estonia tended to lead to the conclusion of bilateral commitments, whereby each contracting party is obliged not to participate in any political or economic agreement directed against the other party. Considering the changes in the governments in Riga and Tallinn, it seemed that Poland no longer intended to insist that the negotiations with the USSR, for the signing of a non-aggression pact, should be carried out simultaneously with the other signatory states of the Litvinov Pact, but it was satisfied only to condition the entry into force of the accession agreement of the other governments (Riga Legation, telegram no. 13296/1931; *Bulletins of the Eastern Political Directorate*: no. 4, p. 45; no. 5, p. 39).

<sup>28</sup> See also the telegrams from Riga no. 17389 and 20175/1931.

Regarding the situation in Romania in the mentioned conjuncture, Patek, who had returned to the capital of his homeland and met his Romanian counterpart in Warsaw, had the opportunity to directly convey the message to Litvinov, with a view to the normalization of Romanian-Soviet relations. Patek had taken advantage of the Soviet dignitary's visit to the Polish Legation in Moscow, to remind him of a promise made two years before, in front of the Romanian minister Davila, to resume conversations on the aforementioned topic. Therefore, Patek pointed out to him that he had been waiting for the resumption of the conversation since then, but Litvinov, dryly, replied: “*We cannot restart any kind of negotiations with Romania, which owns a territory that belonged to us. If Romania wants, it will resume its initiative of negotiations. We do not want to reopen a negotiation in which we would have nothing but to lose*” (*ib.*, file no. 81/1931-1932, p. 39)<sup>29</sup>.

### SOVIET ATTEMPTS AT DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH ROMANIA THROUGH THE LONDON DIPLOMATIC CHANNEL

Because the USSR had not obtained the expected results in the recorded diplomatic attempts, it initiated negotiations with Romania in the first part of 1931, on the London channel, through the Romanian diplomat D.N. Ciotori. He had been contacted by A. Lias, the foreign policy editor of the newspaper “*The Christian Science Monitor*” (London Branch), who, following a conversation with Bogomoloff, counsellor of the Soviet Embassy in London, conveyed the message to the Soviet dignitary for our country, namely that “*the Soviets would like to reach an agreement with Romania, if a formula could be found so that they could escape <with a clean face>*” (*ib.*, p. 102). Ciotori then tried to “*probe*” Soviet aspirations through F.E. Wise, the member of the House of Commons, but also through a friend, Wickham Steed. The conclusion was that, indeed, the Soviets wanted “*an agreement with Romania and that they would have preferred direct negotiations <to stop paying political commissions to intermediaries>*” (*ib.*, p. 103).

At that time, Ciotori had informed the country about the message, through N. Iorga (located in France, at Fontenay-aux-Roses), for which the historian informed him, on 6 March 1931, that the Romanian authorities had determined that he, Ciotori, went to Moscow with authority to discuss only “*the return by the Soviets of the archives and property of our museums*” (*ib.*). Transmitting the information to the Soviet representative, through the same source in London, the answer

<sup>29</sup> See also the telegram from Warsaw no. 508/20 February 1931.

reached him only on 23 April 1931, through F.E. Wise, after which he directed him to Bucharest (via phone no. 24, 25/24 April). Following the approach, Ciotori was called to the country for instructions, *“as soon as the formalities are fulfilled”*, that is, obtaining the necessary documents and visas from the Soviet Embassy, in order to travel to Moscow. Then followed an exchange of telegrams between Ciotori and the country’s officials, as a result of which the Romanian diplomat was in a bit of a mess, because not having received the power of attorney from the country, he could not obtain the *“formalities”*, a fact for which he sent new clarifications to the Foreign Affairs, which he formulated as follows:

1. the initiative of the discussions *“does not belong to us in any form”*;
2. *“absolutely nothing was discussed elsewhere, except whether the Soviets consent or not for us to have a secret discussion with them in order to seek the basis of an understanding which will, then, be completed in an official conference”*; and as a supplement, to avoid any doubt, he added: *“The Soviets do not agree to separately discuss the restitution of the archives and the assets of our museums, the authorization requested to discuss the restitution of the archives was – for the Soviets – only a pretext. The general authorization was essential and the Russians asked for it in order to discuss all the disputed issues (Bessarabia does not enter into the disputed issues)”* (Ib., pp. 105-106).

In the period that followed, no viable result being reached, communication with the London channel ceased.

### FRANCO-SOVIET CONNECTIONS FOR THE CONCLUSION OF A NON-AGGRESSION PACT WITH THE REGULATION OF ROMANIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS

The interest in the normalization of Romanian-Soviet relations was increased on the part of the USSR, not for the sake of Romania, but because it was conditioned by the conclusion of other diplomatic relations. It was clear from Carp’s report, sent from Türkiye, on 12 September 1931 (Ib., pp. 116-118)<sup>30</sup>, following the discussions he had with Count Chambrun. The content of the document also makes us understand why, in the intermediate negotiations that were to come, for the normalization of Romanian-Soviet relations, Romania will be pressured by France and Poland.

In the Soviet political calculation, of guaranteeing security on the part of the West through non-aggression pacts, aiming at the successful conclusion of such

a Franco-Soviet agreement, during that period the negotiations stagnated. And amid the deepening economic crisis, Count Chambrun testified that France had been forced to *“give up the defence policy against Russian dumping”* (Ib., p. 116), due to the progressive worsening of France’s trade balance with the USSR (the difference against France was 100 million francs). Therefore, France had lifted all prohibitive measures to combat Soviet dumping and had considered it more appropriate to conclude a trade treaty. But, because the complexity of the economic problems had proven to be irreconcilable, both sides had felt the need to conclude a *“political agreement simpler and faster to achieve”* (Ib., p. 117). On this basis, secret negotiations were conducted between Barthou and the Soviet ambassador in Paris. A common point of view had been reached, but an *“indiscretion”* appeared in the American press *“suddenly raised the question of the connection”* of those negotiations with those followed between Warsaw and Moscow. About it, the same Chambrun reported: *“In the beginning, therefore, the connection does not seem to have existed, the starting points of both series of negotiations being completely different. At first, France aimed only at balancing the trade balance with the USSR, but the indiscretion committed, however, complicated the problem in such a way that, today, the conclusion of the Franco-Russian agreement depends on the Polish-Russian agreement, and the Polish-Russian agreement depends on solving of the relations between Romania and Russia”*.

Under the given conditions, France had no other solution but to conclude a new *“Karahhan Protocol”* (from 1929) for two years, and the French count said that he would ask for clarifications in Paris if, in relations with the Soviets, *“he has to touch upon the problem of resolving the relations between USSR and Romania”* (Ib., p. 118), without which there could be no Franco-Russian, Polish-Russian non-aggression pact, or multilateral pact of mutual guarantee, which Tevfik Rüşdü Bey must have to support.

On this topic, in the following year, the pressure would increase on Romania, for the *“smoothing”* of Romanian-Soviet relations, which seemed quite difficult, given that the parties remained irreconcilable in supporting their points of view. And, to stay in the same register, the situation was thus expressed in Ankara, by Husein Raghıb Bey, former ambassador to Romania. On the date we are talking about (30 October 1931) he was Türkiye’s envoy to Moscow. In a meeting with the Romanian minister, Carp, on the occasion of the National Holiday of Türkiye, Raghıb Bey clearly conveyed to him that *“there is no possibility of rapprochement”* between Romania and the USSR as long as *“there is no change in the position taken by each”*

<sup>30</sup> Report no. 1441, extracted from: *Therapia*/6 September 1931, registered under no. 53149/12 September 1931.

between the two neighbouring states. And, more explicitly, he formulated: if the Soviet state “fully maintains its point of view and neither Romania wants nor can make any concession on the issue of Bessarabia”, in the given situation, it is no possibility of contact.



Bucharest, June 1934. Nicolae Titulescu, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, together with Jean Louis Barthou, French Foreign Minister, accompanied by other Romanian and foreign officials, at the Tomb of the Unknown Hero in Romanian Capital (Titulescu, ib.).

During the same celebration, Rüşdü Bey wanted to present Litvinov to Carp, but the Romanian minister declined his offer, not being authorized to do so. Thus, the official Romanian-Soviet contacts will be postponed, until, over pressure and sterile negotiations, under the conditions of the debates in the *Disarmament Conference*, within the League of Nations, the harmonization of relations between the two states will be reached by signing the *Conventions defining aggression from London*, on 3-4 June 1933. It was an important step that, a year later, also led to the normalization of Romanian-Soviet diplomatic relations, on 9 June 1934.

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