



THE DYNAMICS OF ROMANIAN-BULGARIAN RELATIONS AND THE INCIDENCE OF DISPUTES ALONG ROMANIA'S SOUTHERN BORDER

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The terms of the Peace Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, signed on 27 November 1919 between the Allied Powers and Bulgaria, imposed economic and military restrictions and territorial cessions on Bulgaria, resulting in a leftward shift among political parties that was also felt throughout Bulgarian society. This pro-communist and socialist current was influenced by Bolshevik propaganda which, amid general dissatisfaction with the treaty's sanctions, requiring Bulgaria to pay reparations amounting to 2,250 million gold francs and significantly reducing its military capabilities, contributed to the promotion of a revisionist policy characterised by irredentism. This policy materialised through support for terrorist and extremist organisations led by the comitadjis, who could no longer be identified with the fighters for national liberation from the abusive rule of the Ottoman Empire during the period known in Bulgarian history as the National Revival. In this international context, Bulgaria joined the revisionist states directly affected by the new world order established after the end of World War I. Among this group, consisting of Germany, Italy and Hungary, the USSR had the greatest interest in bringing Bulgaria into its sphere of influence in order to promote its ideology and political projection throughout the Balkan Peninsula. However, beginning in 1938, Bulgarian politicians showed a strong tendency to integrate into the German sphere of influence, which shaped their political conduct in relations with neighbouring states. However, as early as 1933, negotiations on disputed issues with Romania were proposed at the initiative of the Bulgarian government. In the summer of 1938, in the lead-up to the signing of the Thessaloniki Agreement of 31 July 1938, Romanian-Bulgarian bilateral relations were characterised by a constructive rapprochement, but along the southern border, incidents, often caused by Bulgarian border guards, did not reflect this positive political trend.

Keywords: Reconciliation; border incidents; Border Guard Corps; comitadjis; Thessaloniki Agreement of 31 July 1938;

ROMANIAN POLICY OF BILATERAL RECONCILIATION IN THE FACE OF BULGARIAN NATIONALISM, CHARACTERISED BY THE MAINTENANCE OF TENSIONS AT THE ROMANIAN-BULGARIAN BORDER

At the beginning of 1938, a Romanian-Bulgarian rapprochement was perceived by the international community as a harmonisation of bilateral relations beneficial to the entire region of Southeastern Europe. Both Romanian and Bulgarian diplomacy made serious efforts to negotiate and resolve the pending problems between the two countries. In addition to Romania's signing of the Thessaloniki Agreement on 31 July 1938, by which it recognising and implicitly accepting Bulgaria's right to rearm, an important step towards bilateral political rapprochement by the Romanian government was the concessions granted to the Bulgarian minority through the adoption of the Regulation on Minorities, under which more consistent rights were granted than those requested by the Bulgarian side during the negotiations. This demonstrated Romania's willingness to resolve the existing disputes on the bilateral agenda. Compensation payments to Bulgarians expropriated in Southern Dobrogea followed. Declaratively, King Boris of Bulgaria expressed his desire to develop economic and cultural exchanges, but after the settlement of the minority issue, the government in Sofia changed its position in the context of Romania's efforts to bring Bulgaria closer to the principles of the Balkan Entente. In order to advance such a diplomatic initiative, Bulgaria placed the issue of the restitution of Southern Dobrogea back on the agenda, a proposal that Romania did not accept (Costea, 2002, p. 39).

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The spring of 1939 began in Bulgaria with revisionist demonstrations in the streets and in Parliament, supported by a fierce irredentist campaign against Romania in the Bulgarian press. Following the signing of the Thessaloniki Agreement on 31 July 1938, Bulgaria



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allocated substantial funds to military purposes: 1,923,673,000 leva to the Ministry of War, an increase of 103,073,000 compared to 1938; 266,575,000 leva to the Directorate of Aeronautics, an increase of 91,575,000 leva; 42,720,000 leva to the Maritime and River Defence (the Black Sea Fleet and Danube Fleet), an increase of 7,860,000 leva; and 127,280,000 leva to the Directorate of Compulsory Labour, an increase of 19,220,000 leva. Altogether, these expenditures represented 30.9 % of the 1939 state budget (ANIC, 1938, f. 89). It should be noted that, following the signing of the Thessaloniki Agreement on 31 July 1938 between Bulgaria and the signatories of the Balkan Pact, the military clauses of the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine were abolished, and the Directorate of Aeronautics, the Fleet and the Directorate of Compulsory Labour were placed under the authority of the Bulgarian Ministry of War (Ibid., f. 90).

A particular significant manifestation of this irredentist and revisionist policy was reflected in the numerous incidents that occurred along the Romanian-Bulgarian border. The military authorities of the two neighbouring countries agreed to conclude protocols regulating the procedures for investigating such incidents, taking into account the specific nature of the activities carried out in the immediate vicinity of the border, as well as the rights and obligations of the parties involved. Therefore, on 12 February 1932, following several rounds of bilateral discussions, Protocol no. 5 was agreed upon and signed. This reference document was subsequently supplemented by Explanatory Instructions concerning the Procedure for the Settlement of Border Incidents, the latest amendments to which were adopted by the Romanian-Bulgarian Mixed Commission at its meeting of 26 November 1932. However, incidents continued to be reported by the Romanian military and civilian authorities. In the context of the political developments that took place on the international stage between 1938 and 1939, the attacks and incursions carried out by Bulgarian comitadjis on Romanian territory, allegedly supported by the Bulgarian military authorities responsible for border security, reinforced the suspicions of Romanian political and military decision-makers that Bulgaria was maintaining a provocative and potentially conflictual situation along

the border. Such actions were perceived as possible preparations for future developments involving territorial claims that could jeopardise the political and military balance in the region.

At the beginning of 1939, in January, the Ministry of Air and Navy, through the Commercial Navy Department, requested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs take steps with the Bulgarian government to ease some restrictions affecting the navigation of light yachting or rowing boats on the Danube. According to the document, there was a risk that such vessels could be ordered by Bulgarian border guards to dock simply because it was left to their discretion to determine whether or not the boats had crossed the river or not. In this context, the recreational and fishing vessels largely abandoned navigation on the river and were forced to remain only a few metres from the Romanian bank in order to avoid both the risk of being fired upon by Bulgarian border guards and the possibility of being subjected to administrative penalties imposed by them (AMAE, f.n.).

On 6 February 1939, the Border Guard Service forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a copy of the Protocol concluded in Giurgiu on 28 January 1939 by the Romanian-Bulgarian Mixed Commission, consisting of Colonel Pretorian Septimiu of the 1st Border Guard Regiment and Bulgarian Colonel Nediu Velcov, Chief of Staff of the Ruse Division on behalf of the 7th Bulgarian Border Guard Regiment. Drawn up in accordance with international practice, the Giurgiu Protocol contained provisions intended, on the one hand, to improve neighbourly relations between Romania and Bulgaria and, on the other hand, to prevent future navigation incidents on the Danube (Ibid.). On this occasion, the Romanian-Bulgarian Mixed Commission analysed and discussed the incidents that had occurred between 1 January 1938 and 28 January 1939, the date on which the Protocol was drafted (Ibid.).

According to the Protocol, under the section concerning the *Navigation of military vessels flying their national flag and equipped with mechanical means of propulsion*, the members of the mixed commission agreed that such vessels were free to navigate along the navigable channel of the Danube, regardless of whether the channel



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Under the section Navigation rules applicable to privately owned rowing or sailing boats, the protocol provided that such vessels were prohibited from crossing the demarcation line. Failure to comply subjected their captains to the legal provisions of the state whose waters had been entered. The agreements reached by the Mixed Commission were valid only during daylight hours, from sunrise to sunset.

approached the banks of the neighbouring state. These vessels were permitted to stop in the territorial waters of the neighbouring state only in cases of force majeure. In this situation, the vessel was required to notify the nearest border guard post, either in writing or by acoustic or visual signals, and to receive confirmation that its presence had been observed. The crew could not be compelled by border guards to disembark, except in the event of the vessel sinking, in which case assistance was to be provided in accordance with international regulations governing such emergencies. The Protocol further stipulated that military vessels, whether stationary or underway, could not be challenged by warning shots or other forms of gunfire (Ibid.).

Under the section concerning *The navigation regime applicable to rowing or sail craft belonging to the navy or to border guard units*, it was stipulated that such vessels could use the Danube navigation route provided that they did not cross the demarcation line between the two states. If that line was crossed as a result of unforeseen events, these vessels could be hailed by border authorities for identification purposes. The identification procedure required the vessel to approach the bank sufficiently closely to allow border guards to verify, through direct observation, its status as a military craft. The disembarkation of personnel, detention of the vessel, or the use of warning shots was prohibited. The use of weapons was forbidden even if the vessel failed to respond to repeated signals. Command authorities operating within the sector were required to notify the corresponding authorities of the other state in writing without delay so that appropriate measures could be taken in cases of non-compliance with these provisions (Ibid.).

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Both parties undertook to address any future unforeseen incidents through direct cooperation and mutual understanding between the Romanian and Bulgarian commands (Ibid.)



INCIDENTS AND NEGLIGENCE ALONG ROMANIA'S SOUTHERN BORDER

Although efforts were being made to prevent incidents that might damage bilateral relations, on the night of 25 March 1939, at around midnight, the patrol of Border Post no. 25 *Dobrogea* was attacked by three individuals who opened fire on the Romanian border guards. The Romanian soldiers returned fire, but after the first shot, their weapons malfunctioned, preventing them from pursuing the attackers, who managed to cross the border into Bulgaria.

The first investigation of this incident began on 27 March 1939 and was conducted by Lieutenant Gheorghe Săndulescu, commander of the 1st Ahmatlar Border Squadron, and Lieutenant Totiu Baiev, commander of Bulgarian 1/19 Veseleț subsection. The Romanian officer showed his Bulgarian counterpart the spent the cartridge cases, an unfired cartridge, a knife blade and footprints leading from and back to Bulgarian territory. The Bulgarian officer acknowledged these findings, but when an attempt was made to record them in an official protocol, he refused to do so and requested that the investigation be postponed for the next day. In this context, the commander of the 1st Border Squadron Asfatchioi decided to invite Major Ivan Nichiforov, commander of Bulgarian Section no. 19 Kubrat, to participate in the investigation on the following day, together with Captain Gheorghe Ilie, commander of the Asfatchioi Border Guard Company. Lieutenant Săndulescu remained overnight at Border Post no. 25 *Dobrogea*, in anticipation of the meeting with the Bulgarian officers scheduled for the next day. Before parting that evening, the Bulgarian officer asked him where he intended to spend the night. Lieutenant Săndulescu replied that he would remain at Border Post no. 25 *Dobrogea*. At approximately 04.30 the following morning, the sentry on duty, accompanied by a patrol dog, was alerted when the dog suddenly



Amid the exchange of fire, cries of pain were heard, suggesting that at least one of the attackers may have been wounded. From the very beginning of the incident, Romanian authorities suspected that the attack had been premeditated in order to recover the evidence collected by the Romanian side – the spent cartridge cases, cartridge, and knife blade mentioned above –, which constituted the principal incriminating evidence.

rushed barking towards the thicket in front of the post. Alarmed by noises coming from that direction, the sentry issued a verbal challenge, but received a gunshot in response, which missed its target. While returning fire, the sentry observed several figures moving parallel to the border in the direction of Border Post no. 24 *Coasta de pădure*. As he attempted to aim at the fleeing silhouettes, his weapon jammed. Lieutenant Săndulescu immediately raised the alarm and initiated the measures provided for in the Border Post Action Plan. During their escape, the intruders encountered Romanian border guards not far from the post. The guards challenged them to halt, but the individuals failed to comply, forcing the Romanian soldiers to open fire. The fugitives then changed direction. At one point, they stopped, returned fire, and threw a grenade behind them. Amid the exchange of fire, cries of pain were heard, suggesting that at least one of the attackers may have been wounded. From the very beginning of the incident, Romanian authorities suspected that the attack had been premeditated in order to recover the evidence collected by the Romanian side – the spent cartridge cases, cartridge, and knife blade mentioned above –, which constituted the principal incriminating evidence. It was further suspected that the operation had been planned by Lieutenant Totiu Baiev and carried out by Petcu Decev, a Bulgarian non-commissioned officer. This hypothesis appeared plausible given the Bulgarian officer's unusual interest in learning where Lieutenant Săndulescu intended to spend the night. Additional suspicions surrounded Petcu Decev, who was reputed to be an expert in organising operations conducted by the comitadjis (Ibid.).

On 28 March 1939, at 14.00, Captain Gheorghe Ilie, commander of the Asfatchioi border guard company, and Lieutenant Totiu Baiev, commander of the 1/19 Bulgarian Subsection Veseleți, met at Border Marker no. 177 to discuss the attack carried out against the Romanian patrol between Border posts no 24 and no. 25 on the night of 25 March 1939, the wounding of the service dog belonging to Romanian Border Post no. 20 *Deșișul* by the two Bulgarian border guards from the Bulgarian Post no. 5, while the dog was on Romanian territory, and the incident occurred at 04.30 on 28 March 1939 at Romanian Border post

no 25 *Dobrogea*. According to the minutes drawn up on that occasion, the Romanian side, represented by Captain Gheorghe Ilie, requested that Lieutenant Totiu Baiev confirm that on 27 March 1939, at 09.00, Lieutenant Gheorghe Săndulescu had shown him three or four sets of footprints made by opanci and military boots on Romanian territory, leading from Bulgarian territory and returning to it. He was also asked to confirm that, following these tracks, material evidence of Bulgarian origin had been discovered approximately 400 metres from the border on Romanian territory, near the thicket surrounding Romanian Border Post no. 24. On Romanian territory, approximately 20 paces from the border guards' patrol route, thirty spent Lebel cartridge cases and ten knife blades were found. The Bulgarian side refused to acknowledge the Bulgarian origin of these items, but confirmed the existence, at 300 metres from Border post no. 25 *Dobrogea* and 50 metres from the patrol route towards Bulgaria, of a crater caused by a grenade explosion. Fragments of the grenade handle bearing the inscription "5, ½ C.E.K. 22 VI 1934" as well as shrapnel from the explosion were discovered within a radius of 100 metres. Regarding the footprints, the Bulgarian delegation stated that it could not determine their origin. Consequently, it expressed reservations both about recording the observed facts in the protocol, as well as about accepting that the material evidence was of Bulgarian origin, despite the apparent fact that the items belonged to the standard equipment of the Bulgarian army. Finally, Lieutenant Totiu Baiev acknowledged that at 04.30 on 28 March 1939, he had been informed by the commander of the Bulgarian Border Post no. 2 about gunfire and a grenade explosion on Romanian territory. According to his statement, he immediately ordered the reinforcement of border security measures but did not observe any suspicious individuals on Bulgarian territory (Ibid.).

As a result of the investigation, which revealed a contradictory attitude on the part of the Bulgarian authorities, the Romanian-Bulgarian Mixed Commission concluded that the Romanian border guard patrol had been attacked by individuals who had entered from the Bulgarian territory and subsequently retreated back across the border into Bulgaria. The Bulgarian border guards stationed at Bulgarian



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On 3 March 1939, General Ion Negulescu, commander of the Border Guard Corps, was informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of a note submitted by the Bulgarian Legation in Bucharest concerning an incident that occurred on the evening of 27 August 1938. On that occasion, Romanian Border Post no. 33 "General Radu Jeinescu", guarded by the 3rd Platoon of the 2nd Border Guard Company, fired seven shots in the direction of Bulgarian Border Post no. 12, subordinate to Bulgarian Border Guards Subsection 3/18.

Post no. 2 failed to take any action, claiming that the strong wind that morning had muffled the sound of the gunfire. The Bulgarian border posts merely strengthened their security measures without attempting to determine the cause of the shooting or the grenade explosion. Major Nichiforov declined to participate in the investigation, stating that he was occupied with other duties. In May 1939, two additional attacks were reported in the vicinity of Border Post no. 25 *Dobrogea* (Ibid.).

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He further pointed out that, in the spirit of good neighbourliness, the Romanian border authorities should have complied with the provisions of Protocol no. 5 of 12 February 1932 and its implementing instructions rather than avoiding the meetings proposed by the Bulgarian side (Ibid.).

Regarding this matter, on 4 April 1939, the Border Guard Corps, Border Surveillance Service, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that responsibility for the failure to comply with Protocol no. 5 rested with both the Bulgarian officer Lieutenant Assen Rusev and the Romanian non-commissioned officer Chief Sergeant Șerban Bucur, since neither had complied with the implementing instructions attached to of Protocol no. 5. According to paragraph 5 of those instructions, the Romanian sectors where platoons were commanded by non-commissioned officers, the settlement of border incidents fell within the competence of the neighbouring platoon commander, provided he was an officer, or of the company commander. Romanian non-commissioned officers commanding platoons were authorised only to provide or request information. Chief Sergeant Șerban Bucur, commander of the 3rd Doccilar Border Guard Platoon of the 2nd Afatkioi Border Guard Company, disregarded these instructions and, following Letter no. 74 of 1 September 1938 sent by Lieutenant Assen Rusev, commander of Bulgarian Subsection no.3/18, attended the meeting scheduled for 2 September 1938 at Border Marker no. 243. During that meeting, and under persistent pressure from the Bulgarian officer, the Romanian non-commissioned officer agreed to sign a protocol stating that Romanian border guards at Border Post no. 33 Afatkioi (formerly General Șeinescu Radu) rather than Border Post no. 24, as indicated in Letter no. 74/1938, had fired seven shots during the night of 27-28 August 1938 at four individuals attempting to cross the border illegally. Subsequent investigations failed to identify any traces left by the four individuals. The Bulgarian officer sought to take advantage of this circumstance and recorded in the protocol that the existence of the alleged intruders had not been confirmed and that the shots had been fired by Romanian border guards in the direction of Bulgarian Border Post no. 12. The Romanian side rejected this interpretation,

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On 20 April 1939, the "S" Service transmitted to the General Staff, Section 2, a intelligence report concerning defensive preparations in the Dobrogean border region. According to the report, units of trudovacs were observed in the area between the Varna-Bazargic and Varna-Razgrad railway lines which were engaged in constructing trenches for infantry formations, positions for machine-gun nests, mortar emplacements and artillery positions.

considering it a deliberate attempt by the Bulgarian officer to suggest that the deterioration of good neighbourly relations was attributable to Romania. However, it was widely acknowledged that, in incidents occurring along the border of Southern Dobrogea (the Cadrilater), the provocateurs had invariably proved to be Bulgarian comitadjis, often supported by Bulgarian border guards, whereas no case had ever demonstrated Romanian involvement in such provocations. When asked what evidence supported his claim that the seven shots had been fired towards Bulgarian Border Post no. 12, the Bulgarian officer replied that no traces had been discovered on either side of the border during the investigation and that, consequently, the existence of the alleged intruders could not be confirmed. Ultimately, it was established that the Romanian soldiers had not fired the seven shots at the Bulgarian post but had discharged their weapons while pursuing a group of comitadjis. Furthermore, contrary to the provisions of Protocol no. 5, the Bulgarian officer had discussed the matter directly with a non-commissioned officer and had drafted the protocol accordingly. The Romanian battalion commander had received the Bulgarian officer's letter on the very day the meeting was scheduled and did not have enough time to travel to the designated location on the border (Ibid.).

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position. No concrete fortifications were observed. Groups of trudovacs were also seen at railway stations unloading construction materials, timber and barbed wire (ANIC, f. 102).

On the night of 5 May 1939, at 02:00, the sentries of Border Post no. 74 *Valea Șerpilor* belonging to the Bazargic Border Guard Company, were attacked with fire by three individuals emerging from the Cadieva Forest. The sentries, together with the personnel of the post, returned fire, forcing the attackers to retreat into the forest, where they disappeared. No casualties were reported (AMAE, *Ibid.*).

On 9 May 1939, the "S" Service informed the General Staff, Section 2, about defensive works towards the Dobrogean border by Bulgaria. According to this information, the trenches were camouflaged with branches and brushwood. In some locations, light field fortifications, including wolf pits, positions for light mortars, machine-guns nests, anti-tank weapons and artillery platforms had been constructed. Many of these fortifications were situated along the former defensive line during World War I (ANIC, *Ibid.*, f. 103).

On 15 July 1939, while Captain Periețeanu of the 5th Border Guard Company, guarding Turnu Măgurele, was conducting an inspection at Border Post no. 90 Ostrovul in Dolj county, Bulgarian border guards fired four shots at the Romanian border post as the officer was greeting the sentries. One of the bullets struck the wall of the post (AMAE, *Ibid.*).

A few days later, on 21 July 1939, Engineer Dumitru Fâghenea of the Hydraulic Service was carrying out measurements related to Danube navigation when, after crossing the demarcation line, he came under gunfire from the Bulgarian bank. The incident was attributed to a newly assigned second lieutenant at the Rahova Border Guard Post, who was unfamiliar with the personnel of the Romanian Hydraulic Service and with the nature of their activities. As a result of this negligent conduct, the commander of the Rahova Border Guard Post formally warned the officer and instructed him to avoid similar mistakes in the future (*Ibid.*).

On 12 August 1939, at 20.20, a shot was fired from Svishtov towards the port of Zimnicea, from the direction of the Bulgarian

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barracks towards the tugboat N.F.R. *Dorna*, which had just moored at the pontoon with barge N.F.R. no. 6123. The bullet passed over the tugboat and struck an N.F.R. warehouse, leaving a visible mark. The projectile was subsequently recovered approximately six to seven metres from the point of impact (Ibid.). Two days later, at around 19.45, another shot was fired from the vicinity of the Bulgarian border post at Svishtov. On the following day, 15 August 1939, at 10.45, another shot was fired from the same location, the bullet passing between the border post and the administrative buildings in the port of Zimnicea (Ibid.).

On the evening of 25 September 1939, the patrol of Romanian Border Post no. 87 *Podoaba* came under gunfire attacked from Bulgarian territory. The next day, 26 September 1939, at 10:00, a meeting took place between Captain Dumitru Mălăescu, commander of the 6th Balchik Border Guard Company, and Captain Iancu Popov, commander of Bulgarian Subsection 1/16 Klimentovo. The Bulgarian officer pretended to be unaware of the letter accompanying the request for the meeting, which informed him that Bulgarian soldiers had fired upon the Romanian patrol. In response, Captain Popov questioned the reasons why Romanian border guards had allegedly opened fire on a Bulgarian patrol. Captain Mălăescu replied that the events had occurred in exactly the opposite manner: Bulgarian border guards had fired upon Romanian personnel and this was the reason for the requested meeting. When invited to participate in a reconstruction of the events and to draw up the official report in accordance with Protocol no. 5, the Bulgarian officer refused, arguing that the incident could not be classified as a border incident. Captain Mălăescu reminded him that he himself had previously referred to it as such. Captain Popov replied that he was willing to discuss the matter but would not sign any official documents. When shown the bullets embedded in the wall of Border Post no. 87 *Podoaba*, identified as having been fired from a Steyr-patter rifle, the Bulgarian officer refused to accept this evidence, claiming that the shots might have been fired by guards employed in Bulgarian vineyards who were



equipped with similar weapons. Finally, he promised to investigate the matter and communicate the results to the Romanian side. The meeting without the preparation of the protocol required under the bilateral agreement. Faced with the situation, Captain Dumitru Mălăescu, Commander of the 6th Balchik Border Guard Company, Lieutenant Paul Popescu, commander of the 2nd Ekrene Border Guard Platoon, and Chief Sergeant Vasile Candea, commander of the 1st Gheiceler Border Guard Platoon, drafted an official report recording the matters discussed. Dissatisfied with the outcome of the meeting between Captains Mălăescu and Captain Popov, the commander of the 2nd Bazargic Border Guard Battalion requested a meeting with Lieutenant Colonel Magiarov, commander of Bulgarian Section no. 16 Varna, to be held on 29 September at 10:00, at Border Post no. 87 *Podoaba*. Lieutenant Colonel Magiarov accepted the invitation but proposed that the meeting take place later that day at 15:00, and at Border Post no. 86 *Pietrosul*. He justified the change by claiming that he was unfamiliar with the location of Border Post no. 87 *Podoaba*, despite the fact that Captain Popov had already met Captain Mălăescu there. The Romanian battalion commander confirmed the new time, but insisted that the meeting be held at the originally designated location (Ibid.).

On 29 September 1939, at 15.00, a meeting took place at Border Post no. 87 *Podoaba*, between Major Alexandru Ionescu, commander of the 2nd Bazargic Border Guard Battalion, and Lieutenant Colonel Vasile Jecu Magiarov, commander of the Bulgarian Section no. 16 Varna. They were assisted by Captain Dumitru Mălăescu, commander of the 6th Balchik Border Guard Company, and Captain Iancu Popov, commander of Bulgarian Subsection 1/16 Klimentovo. Despite the evidence presented by the Romanian officers, which indicated that Bulgarian soldiers had fired upon Romanian Border Post no. 87 *Podoaba* on the evening of 25 September 1939, while escorting Pavel Nazarievici Cudinov across the border, the Bulgarian officers refused to acknowledge the facts, so the meeting ended without any positive result (Ibid.)

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was unfamiliar
with the location
of Border Post
no. 87 Podoaba,
despite the
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Captain Popov
had already
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Following the end of World War I, Romania shared borders with three revisionist states – the USSR, Hungary and Bulgaria –, a circumstance that prompted Romanian diplomacy to conclude a series of treaties and conventions designed to protect the country's territorial integrity against external claims.

CONCLUSIONS

After 1918, the year of the Great Union, Romania's principal national and foreign policy objective was the consolidation of its state unity. This objective was reflected both in domestic policy and in the network of international alliances and agreements through which Romania sought to safeguard its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Following the end of World War I, Romania shared borders with three revisionist states – the USSR, Hungary and Bulgaria –, a circumstance that prompted Romanian diplomacy to conclude a series of treaties and conventions designed to protect the country's territorial integrity against external claims.

Bulgaria's duplicitous diplomacy, which on the one hand professed a desire to resolve its complex and often tense disputes with Romania, while on the other hand tolerated the provocative conduct of Bulgarian border guards and the activities of Bulgarian comitadjis, who endangered the lives of Romanian civilians and military personnel serving along the southern frontier, made genuine political rapprochement between the two governments impossible despite the traditionally good neighbourly relationship between the two peoples. This chronic instability along the border, combined with the collapse of the European alliance system, contributed to the progressive total isolation of Bucharest. The result was the territorial dismemberment of Romania in the fateful year 1940, marked in the south by the loss of Southern Dobrogea, known as the Cadrilater.

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