

MILITARY ALLIANCES OF ROMANIA THROUGHOUT THE YEARS OF THE PEACE TREATIES FROM PARIS

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Abstract. *In the period between the two World Wars, Romania and also other small states of Europe, unfavoured by the system of the Peace Treaties from Paris, had to fight for maintaining their territorial status quo. The danger of revising the treaties and also that of communism, fascism and Nazism determined the integration of our country in political and military alliances that had a defensive character. These alliances promoted the peaceful collaboration, the observing of the sovereignty and national dignity and assured the consolidation of their position on international level. To this respect, the most significant step made by Romania was that to become founding member of the League of Nations.*

Keywords: *military alliances, aggression, Romania, convention, states.*

At the end of the World War I, the political and military situation of Romania was different from the one before the war. The fact that its neighbours had changed, influenced both the internal situation and the position in the area of the Romanian state. Instead of the two great multinational empires that it had had as neighbours before the war, there appeared new national states with interests similar to those of the Romanian state and also the Soviet Russia. This inaugurated a new form of political regime and a new policy in the international relations¹. Romania was in an even more difficult situation than in its past, having its frontiers menaced by the surrounding states: “This threat was due either to the retaliation coming from Hungary and Bulgaria that could not accept their depriving of some territories that they had own, or because of the propaganda tendency sustained by the Bolshevik regime that wished to spread its influence as much as possible to the west”².

The acknowledgement of Romania in its natural borders as an independent state, by the Peace Conference from Paris and by the state members of the League of Nations constituted the juridical instrument of organization and internal political and economic consolidation for its international recognition, as part to the elaboration of peace treaties and agreements that had as objective the attainment of the security systems from the European area where it was situated. The security system in the centre and south of Europe was based on the bilateral agreements with France, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, on zone groups as the Little Entente and, later, the Balkan Pact, based on the activity of the League of Nations.

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¹See Dumitru Tuțu, *Alianțe militare ale României (1921-1939)*, in „Probleme de politică externă ale României. 1918-1940. Culegere de studii”, vol. II, Editura Militară, Bucharest, 1977, p. 108; Gheorghe Zaharia, *Considerații asupra politicii externe a României (1919-1929)*, in „Probleme de politică externă ale României. 1919-1939”, Editura Militară, Bucharest, 1971, p. 17-46.

²Cited Romanian Academy, *Istoria românilor. România întregită (1918-1940)*, vol. VIII, Bucharest, Editura Enciclopedică, 2003, p. 432; Romanian Military Archives (cited next as RMA), fund 948, section 3, file 406, f. 175.

As far back as during the preliminary discussions of the Peace Conference, there were begun the discussions for constituting the Little Entente. Concomitantly, there was desired the fulfilment of an older idea, that of making a *Danubian confederation*. At the beginning of the 20th century, Romania initiated the creation of the central-European states organization, to which Poland and Greece to participate, considering that only this way could be reinforced the resistance capacity of the small states and could be imposed the observing of the peace treaties³. Nonetheless, the international situation got complicated because of the Soviet-Polish war. France militated for the organization of the states from the Danubian area in the same time with the constituting of a “containment” around the Bolshevik Russia. The General Staff, after a pertinent analysis of “the available war potential that each of the hostile neighbouring states of Romania had”⁴, reached the conclusion that: “the most dangerous adversary for us was Russia. It could act alone, finding in the situation to lead an operation with its own resources, while Hungary and Bulgaria could act only guarded by alliances, being in an inferior position as confronted to Romania, even if it could have not benefited by the conventions with Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia”⁵.

In order to get through the danger “that was emerging, its main rivals being defeated, the situation in which Romania was from the military point of view”⁶, during 1920-1922, there were concluded numerous bilateral conventions: between Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (14th of August 1920), between Romania and Czechoslovakia (23rd of April 1921), between Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (7th of June 1921). On 2nd of July 1921, at Prague, the Kingdom of Romania signed a military convention with the Czechoslovak Republic. The two states undertake to offer each other military assistance “in the event that one state or another was attacked without provoking by Hungary”⁷. On the 23rd of January 1922, at Belgrade, there was signed a military convention between Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes through which it was expected that the two states to offer reciprocal military assistance if they were unprovokably attacked by Hungary and Bulgaria⁸. After the signing, on 23rd of April 1921 of the *Romanian-Czechoslovak Defensive Alliance Convention* by Take Ionescu, the minister of Foreign Affairs and Ferdinand Veverka, envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary minister of Czechoslovak Republic at Bucharest, on the 7th of June 1921, it came to the concluding of the *Alliance Convention between Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and*

³Memorandum from the 19th of August 1920, Bucharest (not signed).

⁴*Istoria românilor*, ... , p. 432.

⁵*Ibidem*.

⁶Mircea Mușat, Ion Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire, 1918-1933*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1986, p. 1009.

⁷RMA, file 63, f. 78.

⁸*Ibidem*.

Slovenes. Starting with the end of April 1921, Pašić had expressed his desire to organize at Belgrade a meeting between the representatives of the two countries⁹. Belgrade and Bucharest debated repeatedly until they reach to the signing of the *Defensive Alliance Convention*, by Take Ionescu și Nicola Pašić¹⁰. The Convention was almost identical to that signed between Romania and Czechoslovakia, but, moreover, it stipulated the obligation of the signers to offer support to each other in the event of an aggression from Bulgaria. Protocol B, annexed to the Alliance Convention stipulated that “if one of the parties would have to defend itself against the aggression coming from another state not mentioned in the present Convention, the other part engages not only to notice the most favourable neutrality, but also to provide, all the facilities according to the political possibilities and stipulated in the Military Convention”¹¹.

The political factors from Romania considered that, after the concluding of the Alliance with Yugoslavia, a great measure was taken. It was therefore fulfilled the staged plan made by Take Ionescu. In the memorandum from the 12th of June 1921, Take Ionescu informed accordingly the Romanian diplomats accredited in different states, giving in the same time instructions that “the relations with the representatives of Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to be those existent between allies”¹².

The conventions and the treaties concluded between Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia represented a defensive common alliance, made through bilateral treaties in favour of the *status quo*, “in order to protect them together against the exertion of pressure that came from the states that were claiming the revision of the peace treaties”¹³.

The treaties of the Little Entente expressed vital national interests for the defending of the territorial independence and integrity, a new historic experience at the European level. The

⁹The Archives of the Romanian External Affairs Ministry (next cited as AREAM), file 19, the telegram from the 10th of April 1921 to the legation from Prague, f. 39.

¹⁰Art.1. In case of an unprovoked attack from Hungary and Bulgaria against one of the High Contracting Parties, the other part shall come to aid of the attacked part in the way determined though the agreement stipulated in art. 2 of the present convention.

Art.2. The competent technical authorities of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovans shall decide by mutual agreement on the necessary measures to give effect to this Treaty through a military convention that shall be concluded later.

Art.3. Neither Contracting Party shall enter into alliance with a third State before notifying the other Party to the Treaty to that effect.

Art.4. In order to coordinate their peaceful actions, both governments undertake to hold mutual consultations regarding the external affairs issues that are related to Hungary and Bulgaria.

Art.5. The present Treaty shall be valid for a period of two years counting from the date of its ratification. Upon the expiry of this period each Contracting Party may cancel it. It shall continue in force for a period of six months following the notice of cancellation.

Art.6. The present Convention shall be notified to the League of Nations according to The Pact... („The Official Gazette” no.77/10th of July 1921, p. 2881).

¹¹AREAM, fund C. 93, Romanian-Yugoslavian relations, file 79, f. 63.

¹²*Ibidem*, fund C.19, Romanian-Czechoslovakian relations, file 19, f. 43.

¹³Mircea Mușat, Ion Ardeleanu, *op. cit.*, p. 1015.

governments of the three countries would take common actions for creating a peaceful international climate “for the consolidation of the international peace and security, for counteracting the fascism and revisionism that menaced their integrity and independence”¹⁴. Protocol B, an integrant part of the Convention, represented an extra security measure “for two states whose external policy competed to the building of a regional security system, for defending their national frontiers”¹⁵. On the 23rd of January 1922, the generals Constantin Cristescu and Nicola Pašić signed at Belgrade the *Military Convention between the Romanian Kingdom and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*. The technical commissions stipulated four acting variants. The first option was referring to a possible aggression of Hungary against one of the two “Contracting Parts”. At the governmental request of the country “subjected to aggression”, the unattacked state had to decree the army mobilization in 48 hours “and gathered its military forces so that in 20 days to be able to join the attacked ally”. According to the decision of the Technical Commissions, “the minimal quantum of the intervention forces was established to six infantry divisions and a cavalry division (72 battalions, 90 batteries, 24 squadrons) and 30 planes”. For the Romanian army, the concentration area was established at Arad, and for the Yugoslavian forces in the region between Danube and Tisa. The second variant was considering an attack coming from Bulgaria. “The technical details for assistance were identical with the first case”. The area delimited by the rivers Olt and Jiu was representing the concentration territory of the Romanian army. The Yugoslavian army was supposed to shift on the direction Niš-Pirot. The third variant was referring to an eventual combined attack from both of the revisionist states (Hungary and Bulgaria), “the unattacked state was to decree the general mobilization and to attack with the majority of its forces the aggressor that the two supreme commandments had previously established”. The technical commissions made of military representatives saw as possible a simultaneous attack of the both states, “regarded as potential conflict factors”. The “issue of the superior leadership” was outstanding, until a special agreement was to be regulated. The forth variant of conflict stipulated into the convention was that Romania would be at war with any other state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes being obliged to allow the crossing and to facilitate the war materials for Romania. In conditions of reciprocity, Romania pledged to do the same if the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had been in a similar situation.

The Military Convention also stipulated the possibilities of material exchanges and supplying and, in the same time, the transit of the war materials in case of armed conflict. These provisions were similar to those from the Military Convention between Romania and

¹⁴ *Istoria militară a poporului român*, vol. VI, Bucharest, Editura Militară, 1989, p. 82.

¹⁵ *Istoria românilor*,..., p. 437.

Czechoslovakia¹⁶.

To the discussions during the meetings preliminary to the Peace Conference, Take Ionescu notified the fact “that all the divergences that might appear between us, had to be regarded with the friendliness appropriate for the situation of allies who desire a good relation”¹⁷.

After the journey of Take Ionescu to some European countries, including Poland, and after the attempt to solve through talks the litigation between Poland and Czechoslovakia, the negotiations regarding the plan of organization for the Little Entente in five, realized on stages, gained new promising formulas. A first stage was supposed to be the Romanian-Polish Alliance¹⁸. Until 1921, the Romanian government hesitated to conclude any treaty with Poland, for fear of not drawing Russia’s aversion, with which the first country was at war. The closeness between the two countries was possible as a sequence of Poland’s unease that the Romanian-Soviet treaties carried on in that moment, not to be finalized thorough the concluding of a bilateral alliance treaty and for Romania’s fearing of a possible Polish-Hungarian closeness. Another target aimed through the signing of the Romanian-Polish alliance treaty was “to bring Poland on the field of closeness and collaboration with the states of the Little Entente, and actually wishing for the drawing of this country into the new anti-revisionist organization from the centre of Europe”¹⁹.

The problem of realizing “*the alliance of the five*” interested both France and England. Great Britain expressed its agreement for the project of the Little Entente, with some reservations regarding Poland. In its turn, Italy spoke for the concluding of this alliance, considering that “the project served Italy’s interests too”²⁰.

On the 11th of February 1921, Take Ionescu informed the Romanian representatives in the European capitals and not only, on addressing the decision made by the governments from Warsaw and Bucharest, that the treaty between Romania and Poland “to guarantee the eastern frontiers of both countries”²¹. On the 3rd of March 1921 was signed, at Bucharest, the *Defensive Alliance Convention between the Romanian Kingdom and the Republic of Poland*, by the ministers of external affairs, Take Ionescu and the Prince Eustachy Sapieha, according to the decision of “the

¹⁶See *Istoria românilor*, ... , p. 437.

¹⁷Ștefan Osusky, *Origines historiques de la Petite Entente*, in „Dictionnaire diplomatique, sous la direction de Frangoulis”, Editon de l’Academie diplomatique et internationale, Paris, f.a., p. 396.

¹⁸In July 1919 there were established the diplomatic relations between Romania and Poland that had been recognized as a state by Germany since 1918 and by the other Powers during 1919. See *Reprezentanțele diplomatice ale României*, vol. II, Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1971, p. 140-141.

¹⁹Dumitru Tuțu, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

²⁰Apud Mircea Mușat, Ion Ardeleanu, *op. cit.*, p. 1010.

²¹Eliza Campus, *Mica Înțelegere*, Editura Științifică, București, 1968, p. 44 (the telegram 2910 from the 26th of September 1920, from the legation situated in Rome, signed by Take Ionescu).

Republic of Poland's leader and His Majesty, the King of Romania"²². In the same time, the General Constantin Cristescu and the general Rozwadowski, the chiefs of the General Staffs of the two armies, signed the *Military Convention*. The both documents were ratified on the 25th of July 1921, being renewed in 1926. According to the stipulations of art. 1 from the Political Convention, Romania and Poland, "undertook to offer mutual help in case one of them had been attacked without provoking, at the common frontiers from East", circumstances in which the other part started to consider itself at war and was obliged to offer "armed assistance". In the other seven articles, was mentioned the necessity for concluding military conventions, the duration of the convention on five years, "starting from its signing", the obligation that neither of the contracting parties "to treat or conclude any armistice, or peace, one without the other", that none of "the Great Powers was to conclude an alliance with a third Great Power without the previous treating with the other party", the recognition by the Polish government of the validity of Trianon and Neuilly Treaties, and by the Romanian government of the validity of the Poland's agreements with the French Republic etc. The treaty also included the specification though which the two parties engaged to communicate to "the League of Nations, according to the Treaty of Versailles", the content of the entire engagement. To the Conventions, there were attached protocols A, B, C and a statement from the 25th of July 1921. In article 4 from Protocol C, it was stipulated that the two governments should study "together the means in which could obtain a defensive alliance with the neighbouring states" that had signed the Treaties from Versailles, Trianon and Neuilly, for a reciprocal guarantee "against any aggression". A secret provision (point 1 from the secret protocol B) obliged the two states to keep a secret the text of the treaty "as long as the Polish-Soviet Peace Treaty was not signed"²³. 15 days after the signing of the Polish Romanian Treaty, was also signed the Treaty from Riga between Poland and the Soviet Russia (18th of March 1921). Another provision introduced in order to prevent a potential collaboration between Poland and Hungary, a country whose powerful revisionist tendencies the Romanian government feared of, stipulated that "neither of the contracting parties could conclude any alliances with the Central Powers without the accord of the other party"²⁴.

The Romanian-Polish Military Convention, an integrant part of the Political Convention, signed by the generals Constantin Cristescu and Tadeusz Rozwadowski, provided the defensive means for the guarantee of the eastern frontiers of the both sides, specifying "all the measures that

²²The Official Gazette no 89 from the 26th of July 1921; Petre Bărbulescu, Ionel Cloșcă, *Repere de cronologie internațională. 1914-1945*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1982, p. 200-201.

²³RMA, fund 71/Poland, file 64, f. 11. The secret protocol annexed to the Defensive Alliance Convention between the Republic of Poland and the Romanian Kingdom from the 3rd of March 1921.

²⁴*Ibidem*.

were to be initiated if the territories of the two states, separately or concomitantly, were to suffer aggression coming from the eastern areas”²⁵. Art. 1 of the Military Convention stipulated that: “Should one of the contracting states be attacked under the circumstances of a *casus foederis*, according to the stipulations of the political convention concluded between the two states, the unattacked state would have been obliged to decree immediate mobilization, in the same extent as an attacked state”²⁶. Subsequent to other treaties from the summer of 1922, after a memorials addressed to the Romanian General Staff by the military attaché of Poland at Bucharest, through which was evidenced the necessity of fulfilling the military convention, on the 16th of September in the same year, it was signed another Polish-Romanian defensive military convention that annulled the one from the 3rd of March 1921. The purpose of signing the second convention results from art. 1 of it that stipulated that if the states had been attacked, the unattacked state engaged to immediately wage war against²⁷.

For each country, in relation with its own aggressions, there was provisioned, “the quantum of the operative troops: 14 regular infantry divisions, on four infantry regiments and two artillery ones, and 2 cavalry divisions that were to be concentrated in 18-24 days from the decreeing on mobilization”²⁸. The Romanian point of view regarding the commanding said that “every army was to act under its own leadership” and “in the event that the strategic situation demanded that units from one army to operate in the other areas, they were placed under the commanding of the last one”²⁹. Subsequently, there was stipulated that “the communication between the two General Staffs to be under the supervision of certain departments meant to ease the contact and the common making of decisions”³⁰.

As in the case of other small states that had been disadvantaged during the Peace Treaties from Paris by the Great Powers of Entente, being obliged to fight for the defending and promoting of their sovereign rights, Romania’s territorial *status quo* was further on menaced by the early emerging of the defeated states’ revanchist policy. The danger constituted by the revision of the treaties, the threat of communism, fascism and Nazism and, naturally, “the orders of our national unity”³¹, determined the integration of Romania in defensive political and military alliances that

²⁵*Istoria românilor*, ..., p. 434.

²⁶RMA, SIII, file 39/1938. Defensive Alliance Convention between the Romanian Kingdom and the Republic of Poland. Also see AREAM, fund 71/Poland, file 65, f. 268.

²⁷AREAM, fund 71/Poland, file 65, f. 57. The Military Convention between the Romanian Kingdom and the Republic of Poland from the 16th of September 1922.

²⁸*Istoria românilor*, ..., p. 434.

²⁹*Ibidem*.

³⁰*Ibidem*.

³¹Nicolae Titulescu, *Discursuri*, Editura Științifică, Bucharest, 1967, p. 407.

promoted the peaceful collaboration, the observing of the national sovereignty and dignity and that were able to provide for it the consolidation of its international situation. Altogether, the Balkan states felt the urge to establish tighter connections between them for diminishing the degree of dependence towards the Great Powers and for preserving their territorial integrity.

The most important step taken by Romania in this direction was that to become a founding member of the League of Nations, an organization whose declared purpose in its constitutive document was “to defend and protect against any external aggression, the territorial integrity and the political independency of all the members”³². Joining the great winning western Powers from World War I – England and France – Romania militated, through its entire diplomatic activity, for the concluding of defensive political and military alliances with the purpose of consolidating its state unity and keeping the territorial integrity, as against any aggressor.

Even though, as the great diplomat Nicolae Titulescu mentioned, the external policy of Romania “is dominated by the perfect concordance that exists between the Romanian interests and the European interests... Romania is eager for peace, as almost all the nations that had been subjected to the world war... but there is no peace without an international order and there cannot be order without an absolute trust in its steadiness”³³, the concluding of a system of solid and secure alliances with other states, faced many obstacles due to the divergent interest of its possible allies.

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³²N. Dașcovici, *Interesele și drepturile României în texte de drept internațional public*, Iași, 1936, p. 55-56.

³³Nicolae Titulescu, *Documente diplomatice*, Bucharest, Editura Politică, 1967, p. 295.

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