

## **Relations between Romania and the US during the Neutrality Years 1914 -1916**

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**Abstract:** The relation between Romania and the US is a defining one for the whole strategy of our country's foreign policy and one that received special attention from each government. Currently, Romania has an extensive history of successful diplomatic activity directed towards new relations between states, equality, and respect among nations, expansion and security, thus making a valuable contribution to creating a better world. Although the US are not close to our borders, the traditional links have known in recent years a positive trend due to strict observance by both states for the fundamental principles of international relations and law and exchanges of high level visits between presidents of the two countries. Romanian-US relations continued amid extremely important events, even crucial in Romania's history.

**Keywords:** Romania; company; neutrality; United States

### **1. Introduction**

The relationship between Romania and the US defines the whole our country's foreign policy strategy and, more than others, received special attention from each government.

Currently, Romania carries out an extensive and successful diplomatic activity directed towards new relations between states, equality, and respect between nations, security, thus making a valuable contribution to creating a right geopolitical climate. The Romanian-American relations that we approach in this article were carried out during very important events, even crucial in the history of Romania.

The Romanian-US relation during World War I, in the context of a global policy, is determined by the evolution of military operations and political orientation of the

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belligerent states. At that time, US accredited the first consul in Romania. Until the outbreak of the World War I, relations between the two countries consisted of discussions, treaties, and conventions initiated by the consulate and later it continued developing during the war years. When war broke out, Romania and the US found themselves in similar positions of neutrality, although for different reasons.

## **2. The Commercial Contacts between Romania and the US**

All contacts between Romania and the US were initiated during the World War I and the development of relations between the two countries has been intensified, diversified, and strengthened. Romania, with her struggle, her problems, and her people claiming their rights, was a topic of debate both in American newspapers and at the White House.

The outbreak of World War I changed international relations between states. The meaning of interstate relations has changed under the impact of military events, some were seriously disrupted or interrupted, others have continued but with different coordinates and intensity, leading to new connections.

The "neutrality" of both states held both capitals, Bucharest and Washington, on the same international position in relation to the conflict. This situation has highlighted the convergence of interests inevitably and has created closer relations between the two states. In the first two months after the war, the economic and commercial relations between Romania and the United States were increased.

Both the rapid development of the Romanian-US trade in the years 1910 - 1913 and general business conditions promised a favorable development. The demand on the national markets behind the front lines increased sharply and everywhere American commerce had come out of its crisis between 1912- 1913 and began to take short-term credit method, more convenient for the commercial partners. Thus, US exporters had come to the attention of the Far East and South-East European markets (Andronescu, 1916, p. 3).

In August 1914 Avram Tetian, a businessperson from Boston, was in a hurry to visit the capital of Romania. He noted in this regard that now was the best time for Romania to trade and create direct links with US producers, replacing the German and French intermediaries. (Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bucharest,

Problem 75, file 48, f. 185).

As the European powers - former competitors of the US, could not provide the required products for these markets, including the Romanian, due to the problem of satisfying its own needs, the substitution opportunity arose for the American suppliers. American business circles have become quickly aware that the war opened the way for the US to become a world leader in international trade and financial life. The strong American economic offensive, with an increasing scale throughout the war, encompassed Romania as a part of the US and Europe economic relations.

In 1914 - 1916 the commercial and financial circles from the US discussed about an evaluation of the economic needs in the Balkan states before the future peace, as the increasing number of European countries sent procurement commission to the US, in order to receive loans and place different orders, anticipating some of the post-war necessities. (Andronescu, 1916, pp. 2-3). The years of neutrality in Romania coincided with a period of increasing interest for the economic problems, at first the matter of resolving it into the future. The Romanian Liberal Party saw, in a clearer and open light, the direct connection between national policy and national economy. (Vintilă Brătianu, 1914, p. 87)

Concerns regarding the military training – as the Romania's entry into the war event, which perform parallel to the diplomatic preparation that began in the autumn of 1914 (Campus, 1980, pp. 49 - 54), also provided favorable economic ties with the United States.

Thus, there is increasing interest of large US companies and traders to increase exports and acquisition of new economic positions in Romania. Requests to the Washington State Department for information on economic conditions in Romania have started to multiply in 1914 and many large companies like Baldwin Locomotive Works, Studebaker, Kellogg Switchboard & Supply Co. and others, have explored the different possibilities of placing their capital market products on Romanian market. (Stanciu, 1979, p. 140).

### **3. The Decisions of US Secretary, Charles Vopicka**

Avram Tetian was convinced that the political and economical circumstances guarantee the success, and was empowered to offer his services as consul of

Romania in Boston. (Andronescu, 1916, p. 5)

The fact that the Romanian government did not have any representation in the US attracted the attention, as in 1915, W.J. Bryan - the Secretary of State deplored the existence of such circumstances. (USNA, R.G. 59, d.f. 1910 - 1929, doc. 7017111/10, letter of Vopicka to R. Lansing, 24 December 1915).

As a result, the American minister in Bucharest, Charles Vopicka, approached several times with Romanian officials the issue of opening a Romanian delegation in the US capital.

In December 1915 he obtained the promise Romanian Foreign Minister, Emilian Porumbaru of the even, strengthened by the Finance Minister E. Costinescu, that in the future budget would be provided the necessary funding for setting up a delegation in Washington. To stimulate the emerged interest in developing bilateral trade relations, in 1915, minister Vopicka organized a meeting of the chief Romanian and American businessmen which visited Bucharest, on which occasion it was decided to establish a US- Romanian Chamber of Commerce. (Stanciu, vol. I, 1934, p. 35)

In 1915 a series of commercial business activities reached different stages of completion. Although signs of such new openings in trade between the two countries registered an abandonment.

The Chamber of Commerce, the consulate projects set or proposed by Avram Tetian, even the promise made to Vopicka by opening a delegation, have not come to life (Iliescu, 1924, pp. 12-13). The changes were bind to the Romania's growing isolation.

With Turkey's entry into the war and closing the Black Sea straits, in October 1914, Romania's connection with the outside countries could be performed only under very heavy conditions, through Serbia-Greece (via Thessaloniki), then only through Russia. Trade with the United States basically became so difficult that very soon could not be continued.

Despite the obstacles generated by the transport, it was organized import of necessary goods and products supply, due to the war that Romania took part. Because of the insufficient domestic industrial production and the failure of the plans which included the equipment of the army, the Ion Bratianu Government was forced to supply from the distant United States. (Iliescu, 1920, p. 18)

Old vendors, Germany and Austro-Hungary, started to have problems in meeting orders of materials and supplies from Italy, England and France had proved it lacks. (Archive Bucharest, Prime Minister's Fund, file 42/1914, pp. 20-23). US solution, which seemed at first that "unless however unrealistic", it was ultimately preferable and a political consideration. However, the move towards an approach to Entente, Romania have certain reserves and the confidence that "could not get anything without the government army to take certain military and political commitment" towards Paris and London.

This conviction exhort you to preserve freedom of action in order to obtain recognition of the rights of Romania, which was therefore preferable to supply a neutral country like the US.

One of the first steps in organizing supply from the United States was adopted in November 1914. Based on a report stating that obtaining materials contracted from Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Spain and Italy, realized only partially and poorly, the Board Ministers endorsed the recommendation that "a committee composed of an officer and a senior official from the Romanian Railways had to go immediately to the United States of North America".

It's mission was to deal directly with US factories' supply of raw materials needed for manufacturing establishments of military artillery, 200 000 projectiles and other orders in progress and shipment to the country of two million cartridges and 100 000 weapons." (Poincare, 1928, p. 434)

These materials were urgent needed to be obtained. In order to complete the shipment, the engineer Theodor Orghidan from the Romanian Railways, was alleged to go to the United States of America, where he stayed there a longer time. (Archive M.A.E., Fund 71/1914, E.2, part II, Madrid-Paris, 1914 - 1929, folder 12, f. 313 - 314)

Raymond Poincaré wrote that Ion I.C. Brătianu conditioned Romania entering the war against Austria-Hungary - in a discussion with the minister of Russia in Bucharest - from an insurance, among other things, that the Allies would support Romania "to reach a significant American military supply accessories" (Archive M.A.E., Fund 71/1914, E.2, part II, Madrid-Paris, 1914 - 1929, folder 12, f. 313 - 314).

Around the same time, Romania probe the opportunity to get its first loan from the United States. The intention to acquire a loan free from political conditions are first

applied towards the end of 1914, an amount of 50-100 million lei, but the Romanian request was refused. (Link, 1957, pp. 151 - 152)

In December 1914 N. Lahovary Romanian - minister in Paris, contacted John R. Carter, who was a former US minister in Bucharest (1909 - 1911), and at that time the head of the Paris branch of the largest bank - Morgan Harjes. Lahovary, inquired "if it was not possible to find in New York the amount that we would have immediately". (Archive, M.A.E., Fond, 71/1914, E. 2, Madrid - Paris, 1914 - 1929, file 12, f. 313 - 314).

The idea of a distancing from the financial markets of Berlin, Paris and London, where the Romanian government was very closely linked with traditional relations, and to appeal to another financial center, the Wall Street, was certainly a novelty and its realization could not be possible without some difficulties.

Outside the likely hostile reactions of the old creditors of Romania, the call for the first time of the extra-European high finance was done in a market crowded with applications and hampered by restrictions imposed by the government in Washington. Since the beginning of the war, the US government had been taken some finances measures which prohibited the loans to the states implicated in the World War I.

#### **4. The Relations between the two Countries during the War**

Neutral countries still retain their access to loans and therefore Romania have reason to good expectation. (Arch. M.A.E., Fond, 71/1914, E. 2, Madrid - Paris, 1914 - 1929, file 12, f. 313 - 314). Although, the answer of the Morgan Company was contrary to the expectations, referring that US funding, already highly indebted London, represent an operation to transfer US gold to Romania's account through the Bank of England, (Dobrovici, 1934, pp. 292-293) as requested by the government in Bucharest.

In those circumstances, the Romanian ambassador to the UK, Nicolae Misu, concluded that American finances refusal explanation must be sought again in London, the only place where could be find the capital that was needed.

In May 1915, after Italy entered the war, it had stopped delivering weapons promised to Romania, which ever it for himself, France delaying the agreement of 8 March 1915 providing military material and, in time, it was thought that in England "he could not hope for anything" (Abrudeanu, 1921, p. 281).

*“Remains America where they must look to found the factory for ammunition and money”* to pay for orders, like Vasile Rudeanu was saying. Because now the orders placed in Spain and Switzerland were themselves far from enough in the second half of 1915 military supplies Romania had even”in a serious impasse” (Abrudeanu, p. 282, 604) so were taken urgent measures to action in the United States.

Subcommittee of the United States was able to resume work only after Rudeanu personally went to London to explain the whole situation to James Balfour, Foreign Minister in the Office of English. Even later England continued to follow closely and to “investigate” the exchange of telegrams between Miculescu and Rudeanu, the entire time the former was active in United States.

Among other difficulties, U.S. supply was confronted with the lack of transport ships, which at one point seemed the”most serious” difficulty. Materials shipped in the United States first had to be transported on a route that included French and British ports, where supply committee in Paris ensure their compactation and sending to our country. Until August 1916 the Commission decided to close this operation because only 3 vessels remaining outside the Romanian Black Sea after blocking the Dardanelles, namely “Bucharest”, “Danube” and “Jiu” (Archive M.A.E., Issue 75; record 48, f. 188. A letter to the Foreign Ministry in 1916).

At their failure were then added and hostile measures taken, as we have seen, by the English government, which led to blocking materials in US docks, a situation which, in turn, create other complications to Miculescu subcommittee. Struggling to find suppliers, money and ships, he continued to work in the United States until Romania's entry into the war.

In all war supplies made by Romania, quantities of materials from the USA eventually exceeded those obtained in Italy, Switzerland and Spain; they were however much lower than those purchased from France. Since England has also supplied materials than only after Romania entered the war, supplying from the US stood up. In August 1916 this ranked second in importance to that carried out in France. (Report from 1915).

In those circumstances, the Romanian-US trade was limited in range in August 1914 - August 1916, almost only supplies of military material undertaken by the Romanian state. Like other private transactions, exports to the United States stopped him that total value of trade between the two countries has dropped from

over 34 million lei on 1913 to 1.6 million lei in 1915 and 1.1 million lei in 1916. (USNA, R.G. 59, d. f. 1910 - 1929, doc. nr. 87120 /2).

While economic relations have narrow, neutrality years have registered unexpected possibilities in the field of Romanian-American political contacts, once so low. These will increase, as we shall see, as the political and diplomatic activities of the two countries and it will become more intense, depending on the evolution of the war and their position towards global conflict.

Neutrality for Romania and the United States marked a new stage in achieving spiritual solidarity of the Romanians people in the United States for the national cause.

Since 1914, under the influence of events occurring in Europe, the patriotic feelings of the Romanians living in the US, began to know a revival of which developed gradually in the years 1917-1918 into an ample movement in support of Romania and national ideals. Initially, the absence of Romanian consulates prevented some of those who are Romanian citizens, expressed their desire to immediately return to the country "in order to do our duty", as wrote most of them. "America", August 2, 1914, Article: *War, king and Romanians*).

The Romanians of Transylvania, driven by the same desire, they could neither they leave the United States because they had no Romanian documents and consequently entered with the Germans, Hungarians and Austrians among people that the US government had forbidden them to travel to Europe, after the outbreak of war. ("America", September, 1914)

Romanian Government, although further postponed the opening of a representation in Washington, however, has changed over time, the attitude towards the Romanians in the United States. It began to reveal its concerning for the potential significance of the patriotism that represented the immigrants.

In 1915 they initiated contacts with the ministers of France and England on the conditions in which they could carry out such an organization, (Learn Congress Romanians abroad in the country, 1916, p. 127). But the plan of creating the organization was abandoned because of the difficulties that emerged in the way of the time. The US neutrality herself did not allowed to achieve such a project.

Romanian government wanted to initiate a propaganda campaign in the United States, something that, in different ways, both member of the Entente and the Central Powers made in order to influence emigration and American public opinion

in favor of their political objectives.

But, by 1916 it has not done anything like this. The patriotic feelings of the Romanians in the United States, that such propaganda would have cleared at least Romania's attitude towards the big problems, have evolved spontaneously, finding power in their own strength, manifesting their own forces. Necessary to understand the episodes after 1917, the Romanian emigration knowledge first US reactions require at least a review of them, although certainly deserves more than that.

Early on April 1914, the conduct of events allowed the Romanians over the ocean to intuit that they were on the threshold of great and expected changes. On 23 and 26 April the edition of the newspaper "America" addressed its readers with significant and repeated the call, "be ready!" waiting for the moment to raise the issue that was the "sick man", an Austria-Hungary. In this atmosphere spirit, the Association of Romanians living in the United States was taking effect and divisions between different groups and old newspapers continued to exist.

Hearing of the outbreak of war in Europe, the issue heading towards Vienna and Budapest about applications of the Romanian Austro-Hungarian citizens to defend the "country" in the military service, opened a rift with the imperial authorities. The impression that war is "the king" and not Romania generated first a general exhortation not to grant the request of departure to Europa. ("America", August 24, 1916).

On 6 August 1914, this sentiment was clearly expressed by "America" when it wrote that "we have to follow our brothers from Hungary to all shores except that of taking up arms against Romania, which would be a crime to willingly do. "For now was born the question" what do we do today-tomorrow comes us if the call to arms for the Romanian nation and estate law?" as he wrote in the same newspaper further. The answer he gave everything "America" and everything on August 6, a call that addressing all Romanians in the United States finally let them know that he had come "to show our worthiness day ... or tomorrow can arrive today want to contribute with our possessions, with our blood in the administration of the national ideal. It's time for the facts!"

The excitement of the moment was shown by the fact that the "National Fund" launched by the Union of Societies to support Romanians in Transylvania that were to be hit by a large war contribution immediately known. It followed the news but Romania's neutrality and confusion sown by conflicting news appeared in the

American press announcing Romania joined either the Entente or the Central Powers, which produced dissapointing in the further months, explained otherwise, among the Romanians living in the U.S. ("America", August 24, 1916). The eagerness to manifest their national feelings burners was thus put to the test, but the respite intervned to change Romania's attitude could still be used to more intensive cultivation of the idea of unity and solidarity.

Driven by the news of the congress in Bucharest on keeping cultural unity of all Romanians League in the spring of 1915, the patriotic activity of the Romanians in the US knows a new revival. Congress is welcomed by some companies in the United States through letters, "national manifestations" of colonies multiply, begin to make money again in the "National Fund". In August 1916 it had reached a total of 6,400 dolars. (Ionescu, 1914, p. 44). Given that events of national character were now in almost all Romanian colonies, forces favors a rapprochement between central organizations gaining ground in 1915. (Ionescu, 1932, p. 328)

An attempt of reconciliation between the papers"America" and"Romania" failed. While first see the need to move from raising aid, which it turns out to be quite modest at this stage, an active combat and open manifestation of national spirit, if need by making representations to the US President,"Romania" found such conduct to be incompatible with US neutrality Romanians and duties toward their country of adoption.

In 1915 it came to the idea of establishing a National Congress of all Romanians in the United States, as the central organ in which the representation of all the forces supporting fulfillment of the national ideal.

On 1 January 1916 a first call of the father Podea, the leader of the newspaper "Help", called for the practical realization of the union, which paved the way for an approach between the League and the Union of Societies, the most important of central organizations. In turn, in June 1916, the leadership of the Union took the initiative of creating a National Committee, which was to bring together the leaders of central organizations and one representative of the Romanian newspapers.

As regards Romania's relations with the United States in political terms, although they were not close, because the two governments aimed at special objective, the very fact that the war has become a common object of attention for both countries which increased sharply mutual interest knowledge attitudes. It is interesting to know, for example, how this has contributed to knowledge development in

Romania of US diplomatic and vice-versa.

From consultation to Romanian press that our country does not escape the attention of any US war with Mexico, since 1915, nor the many moments of tension between London and Washington on the interpretation of neutrality.

They were both known and more intense economic relations established between the United States and the Entente powers, as noticed and reasons for the crisis between Washington and Berlin, after tightening the naval war in the Atlantic. Incidents like the one created by the sinking by German submarines vessel "Lusitania" aroused the Romanian press comments favorable Germany, but there is sufficient evidence to permit a finding that growth as political circles in Bucharest questions concerning the possible reaction of the United States would be concluded that USA could join the Entente. Until the spring of 1917, consideration of such an eventuality did not occur nowhere in Europe.

The entire evolution of the United States, as their political past in Romania, did not encourage any such opinion, with one exception - the more remarkable - of Take Ionescu. Prominent conservative leader anticipated early days of the war, that one of the 4 major consequences would be producing in about 50 years and hastening the process by which US had become, in his opinion, one of the most influential states in international life.

Western democracies confident victory in their confrontation with the central empires, Take Ionescu thought that the US would enter the war on the Entente side of affinity political system, pushed and acts of "barbarism of Germany horrible and stupid". But these prophecies, revealing a deep intuition polling in the future, not only moreover to Take Ionescu, however, did not reach it represents the opinion widespread. They passed their time disregarded, among other statements noisy pro-Entantes leaders, probably attributed Take Ionescu's sympathies internationally renowned for Anglo-Saxon world.

Other important people in Romanian political environment, though of course carefully watching developments in the US, remained rather based on opinions and feelings solidity of American isolationism oldest US shown to us. As observed in 1912 US Minister Bucharest, John B. Jackson, the capital of Romania in political circles there were only "vague ideas about the United States, few politicians can say they are pro or anti-American ...," concluded the American diplomat referring of course to the Liberals, now, in 1914 - 1916 were the government.

The fact that Romania has postponed eventually opening a diplomatic representation in Washington could not be any stranger to reality mentioned above. Among the factors cultivate foreign diplomatic action in the neutrality years Government I.C. Brătianu granted the US had no place or even a sufficiently important to justify the required financial sacrifice that the opening of the delegation. Bucharest dispense, but this way, the opportunity to have a direct source of information and accurate on the situation in the US not incidentally, therefore they escaped Romanian government policy nuances President Wilson, which of course would be of interest to Romania.

Since May 1916, for instance, that the right to self-determination Wilson was “the truth itself obviously a natural law, a necessary corollary of democracy.”

Although Wilson then added that this right was not a principle of the US policy, its mere mention by the US president was one of the first recognition of that right made during the war by a great power.

Given developments in the war, these attempts at mediation have failed, but they suggested diplomatic position that Washington was engaged, trying to keep an equal distance from both warring camps.

Increasing US influence as a neutral power, however, it remained a fact that was reflected in the increased activity of the US Embassy in Bucharest. Legation in the past this was not merely a diplomatic post of secondary importance, but the amplification of military conflict in the Balkans in the years Romania has broadesned the scope neutrality concerns incumbent US Secretary Charles Vopicka.

## **5. Conclusion**

Regardless the feasibility, the economic relations began to be viewed through the prism of amplifications almost inevitable. The supply with war material from the US was a new experience even if it considers only the proportions or financial implications. More importantly, it seems that events drew attention largely on political and diplomatic issues, in which mutual interest essentially reached areas. So, the relation between Romania and the US defines our entire country's foreign policy strategy and more than others received a special attention from each government.

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