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YAROSLAV POPENKO,

Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Melitopol, Ukraine)
e-mail: popenkoaroslav80@gmail.com, ORCID 0000-0003-0841-0875

IHOR SRIBNYAK,

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Kyiv, Ukraine)
e-mail: i.sribniak@kubg.edu.ua, ORCID 0000-0001-9750-4958

NATALIA YAKOVENKO,

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine)
e-mail: zaliznaledi@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0002-3493-5950

VIKTOR MATVIYENKO,

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Kyiv, Ukraine)
e-mail: vikmaryuniv@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0002-0012-5175

“...COMING TO COMMON PEACE TOGETHER WITH OUR ALLIES”: ROMANIA’S FOREIGN POLICY BALANCING DURING WORLD WAR I

The article covers the course of negotiations between the plenipotentiaries of Romania and the leading states of the Entente and the Quadruple Alliance during the First World War. Facing the dilemma of determining its own foreign policy orientation – by joining one of the mentioned military-political blocs, the Romanian government was hesitating for a long time to come to a final decision. At the same time, largely due to this balancing process, official Bucharest managed to preserve its sovereign right to work out and make the most important decisions, while consistently defending Romania's national interests. By taking the side of the Entente and receiving comprehensive military assistance from Russia, Romania at the same time faced enormous military and political problems due to military superiority of the allied Austrian and German forces at the Balkan theater of hostilities. Their occupation of much of Romania forced official Bucharest to seek an alternative, making it sign a separate agreement with the Central Block states. At the same time, its ratification was being delayed in every possible way, which enabled Romania to return to the camp of war winners at the right time. At the same time, official Bucharest made the most of the decline and liquidation of imperial institutions in Russia and Austria-Hungary at the final stage of the First World War, incorporating vast frontier territories into the Kingdom. Taking advantage of the revolutionary events in Russia, the Romanian government succeeded, in particular, in resolving the “Bessarabian problem” in its favor. In addition, Romania included Transylvania, Bukovina and part of Banat. An important foreign policy achievement of Romanian diplomacy was signing of the 1918 Bucharest Peace Treaty, as well as its participation in the Paris Peace Conference.

Key words: World War I, foreign policy strategy, diplomacy, government, King Carol I, Romania.

Introduction

Development of the European continent at the beginning of the twentieth century was determined by several important factors which had a direct impact on the government policy of the leading states of Europe. It, in its turn, led to the outbreak of the First World War. Among its main features were the following: the “Pax Britannica” period was inexorably approaching its end, the existing system of Vienna international relations clearly demonstrated its failure, the German leadership proclaimed the beginning of the “era of world politics”, the process of formation of new military-political and military-economic blocs was gradually coming to an end etc. In this regard,

it was the war that was of greatest interest, since its results could create a new geopolitical configuration of the world in general and Europe in particular. It should be taken into consideration that, in addition to the leading economic and military-political players – France and England, the post-war destinies of Europe were also influenced by other countries, whose governments for a long time managed to balance between the interests of the two opposing blocs. Romania belonged just to such a category of states, trying to position itself as one of the regional leaders in the Balkan region.

Being tightly “sandwiched” between the Central Union and the Entente, official Bucharest, nevertheless, ma-

naged to take advantage of the aforementioned balancing during the world war. Owing to its foreign policy strategy, the royal government retained its sovereign right to develop and make all important decisions, including also those that concerned the defense of national interests of the state. Moreover, Romania was able to significantly expand its borders, which became possible because of the crisis and destruction experienced by Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire during 1917-1918.

Various aspects of the history of Romania's participation in the First World War were directly considered and analyzed by Ukrainian and Russian scholars, among which the works of F. Notovich, S. Hakman, V. Croitor, V. Vinogradov, V. Yastrebchak, M. Meltyukhov, M. Oskin and others should be noted (Notovich, 1947; Notovich, 1959; Vinogradov, 1969; Gakman, 2004: 68-79; Mel'tyukhov, 2010; Kroytor, 2011: 185-191; Yastrebchak, 2011: 21-33; Os'kin, 2016: 158-170; Popenko, 2016: 53-59; Popenko, 2017: 52-61; Popenko & Sribnyak, 2021: 143-162). It is also worth mentioning papers of Romanian historians, who analyzed various diplomatic aspects of Romania's entry into the war (Iordache, 1998; Tămaș, Bonda, 2015: 133-140; Solomon, 2016: 237-265; Spînu, 2016: 79-93; Petrescu, 2016: 45-71). At the same time, a number of aspects in the history of Romania's international relations with neighboring states during the war are still poorly studied and require their reassessment and rethinking. In particular, it concerns the reasons for the signing, content and consequences of the 1918 Bucharest Peace Treaty.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the peculiarities of Romania's diplomatic maneuvering in the international arena during the First World War, as a result of which it first found itself in the Entente camp, and then signed a separate agreement with the Central Block, and at the final stage of the war finally returned to the Entente. The research methodology is based on the use of problem-chronological, concrete-historical and comparative-retrospective methods, the combination of which allowed to conduct a comprehensive analysis of this topic.

Results of research and discussion

It should be mentioned that under the terms of the Bucharest Treaty of August 10, 1913, which was signed following the results of the Second Balkan War, Silistria with the region and Southern Dobrudja (with the population of about 286 thousand people) (Shkundin, 2007: 12) were transferred to Romania. As a result, the total area of the Romanian Kingdom increased to 138 thousand square kilometers, and the number of subjects increased to 7 million 540 thousand people. In addition, Romania managed to maintain a leading position among the states of the Balkan region, both in numerical superiority of the population and area, and in military potential. In general, following the results of the two Balkan wars, Romania was unofficially called "the gendarme of Europe" (Rumyniya, 2013: 13) (in the regional sense of this expression – authors) and the main guarantor of the signed Bucharest Peace Treaty. Here its interests partially coincided with the plans of the Russian Empire, which became the basis for the rapprochement of the states in the second half of 1914 (Rumyniya, 2013: 13). For a rather short period of time, this trend of rapprochement also received internal political support, although initially the Romanian elite was

not unanimous in their views on this issue. Thus, during the work of the Crown Council on July 21 (August 3), 1914, a discussion broke out concerning the official position of the state in the upcoming war. King Carol I insisted on a military-political orientation towards the Central Block, in accordance with the terms of the 1883 treaty. In his turn, Prime Minister I. Brătianu insisted on a strategic waiting: "The war will be long, we will wait for events to unfold. We will have another opportunity to say our word" (Vinogradov, 1969: 45). As a result of the meeting, it was decided not to enter the war on the side of Germany and its allies. Besides, it was decided to immediately start strengthening the state borders.

Thus, the foreign policy agreements of Romania and the Central States parted for a while, and no longer reckoned with the 1883 treaty. Later, in his memoirs, Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister O. Czernin noted: "Even in the years from 1914 to 1916, Romania was never really neutral. It has always favored our enemies and thwarted our attempts to strengthen our forces" (Czernin, 1923: 107-108).

Meanwhile, Romanian neutrality could not be ignored by the Russian foreign ministry. The result of negotiations between the states was the signing of the corresponding document on September 18 (October 1), 1914. In the declaration of Russian Foreign Minister S. Sazonov to the Romanian Ambassador in St. Petersburg C. Diamandy, it was emphasized that the Russian Empire pledged to resist any attempts to violate the territorial integrity of Romania and generally recognizes for Bucharest "the right to annex the Romanian-populated regions of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy" (Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1935: 342). The possible status of Bukovina was also discussed as a separate item. The document, signed by S. Sazonov, noted: "As for Bukovina, the principle of numerical (ethnic – authors) superiority of the population will be the main basis for delimiting territories that will have to be annexed either to Russia or Romania. This division of territories should be carried out directly after a special study of the issue on the ground" (Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1935: 342). The document also contained other points: Romania retained the right to occupy the mentioned territories at any moment convenient for it; the Russian government committed itself to lobbying for Romanian interests in the region during negotiations in London and Paris; Romania had to maintain friendly neutrality with respect to the Russian monarchy (Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1935: 342-344).

Thus, the Russian Empire diplomatically granted Bucharest the right to annex lands of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, according to ethnic principle. In its turn, it did not abandon its own territorial claims to the possessions of the Habsburgs. According to contemporary Russian historians, negotiations between states in 1914 "turned into a trade for the right to annex Ukrainian, Hungarian and Serbian lands to Romania" (Za balkanskimi frontami, 2002: 117). At the same time, one should pay attention to the fact that at the initial stage of the World War, Romania was in a rather advantageous strategic position. Declaring its foreign policy neutrality, official Bucharest, meanwhile, tried to mobilize all possible resources for the implementation of its own state project to create a "Greater Romania". It was this project that provided for the annexation of the lands where Romanians lived (among

others, Bukovina and Bessarabia were to enter the Kingdom's "control zone").

Until mid-1915, the Romanian leadership as a whole managed to maintain its own foreign policy positions. However, in the summer of that year, as a result of several defeats (in the Dardanelles operation, in Galicia and Poland), the Entente countries significantly intensified their diplomatic activity towards Romania, trying to attract the latter into direct participation in the war. In case of a positive response from the Kingdom, the Entente agreed to recognize territorial claims of Bucharest to Transylvania, Banat, and part of Hungarian lands. In parallel with negotiations, the Romanian government became more active, and in every possible way justified the need for the Kingdom's entry into the war on the side of the Entente. In its opinion, the neutral status of Romania did not provide any opportunity for the economic survival of the Kingdom against a background of confrontation between the two military-political blocs. The point is that as a result of hostilities, traditional trade relations of the state, focused on Western European suppliers and consumers were interrupted. Romania was increasingly lacking steel, which automatically affected the capacity of mechanical engineering and metallurgy. As a result, in February 1915, two-third of industrial workers in metallurgy appeared unemployed (*Za balkanskimi frontami*, 2002: 120). The official entry into the war on the side of Germany, the Ottoman Empire (November 14, 1914) further aggravated the state of crisis in the country. One of the first military-economic actions of the Turkish government was the blockade of the Black Sea straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Romania faced the fact of inevitable economic catastrophe, as through these straits the main flow of Romanian exports passed. In the largest port cities of the country (Galati, Brăila, Constanța, Sulina), the turnover was steadily decreasing. A new wave of unemployment and dissatisfaction with the actions of the government swept over the country.

In the summer of 1916, the Romanian leadership decided to officially enter the war on the side of the Entente. In the opinion of I. Brătianu, it no longer made sense to delay this decision, so the Romanian elites had to decide – "Now or never" (*Gakman*, 2004: 71). Negotiations between the parties were completed with signing of special political agreement and a military convention on August 4 (17) (*Tsarskaya Rossiya*, 1925: 226-230). Romania pledged to mobilize its armed forces and declare war on Austria-Hungary not later than August 15 (28), 1916. In its turn, the Entente agreed to revise the borders in favor of a new ally. On August 14 (27), Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary. At that time, the total number of its armed forces was 1,105 thousand people. Contrary to the optimistic prognostications and plans of the Romanian command, the 1916 military campaign ended with a crushing defeat for the country. The Romanian army was defeated in Transylvania and Dobrudja, with over 240 thousand fatal casualties. About 70 thousand people retained their combat effectiveness, which could hold only 30 km of the front; the remaining 450 km were covered by Russian military units. In December 1916, the army and government were forced to evacuate to the territory of Moldova, having left Bucharest, which was occupied by the Germans (*Sulyak*, 2006: 54).

For the Kingdom, next year the situation did not improve either. At the beginning of 1917, the Romanian front ran along the line of the Eastern Carpathians – Focșani – Brăila – the mouth of the Danube. As a result of successful military operations, the Central Block coalition managed to occupy 99,845 sq. km, which made up about 72.5% of the entire Romanian territory. Moreover, the next offensive on July 24, 1917 by the united Russian-Romanian army on Focșani did not bring the desired result. The Allies managed to break through the front, but the situation at the South-Western Front prevented the deployment of a decisive offensive. According to Russian General L. Kornilov, addressed to A. Kerensky – "an army of mad, ignorant people is running away" (*Zayonchkovskiy*, 1938-1939: 136). German troops, in their turn, launched a counteroffensive on August 6-8, but soon stopped their advance. As General A. Zayonchkovskiy justly noted, "German operations at the Russian-Romanian front did not give them what they could count on considering the balance of forces, taking into account not only the strength, but also the position of the armies". He also stated that in general, by August 1917, the situation at the front had stabilized (*Zayonchkovskiy*, 1938-1939: 136).

The 1917 February revolution in Russia and the intensification of national liberation movements on the territory of the no longer existing Romanovs' Empire became quite unexpected events for Romania. As the famous Romanian military-political figure, future Prime Minister A. Averescu noted in his diary: "A real disaster for us: the revolution in Russia" (*Za balkanskimi frontami*, 2002: 288). Without exaggeration, Romania faced the threat of imminent collapse, which was confirmed by numerous eyewitnesses of those events. In particular, the Secretary of Russian diplomatic mission in Romania wrote: "Epidemics are already raging, and what will happen in a week or two is generally hard to imagine... There are coffins in cemeteries for several days, since there are not enough workers to dig graves". Almost word for word, similar facts were confirmed in their reports by the staff of the British military mission in Romania: "The work of the railway transport is paralyzed. The soldiers left on the railway lines are dying of hunger in the carriages" (*Za balkanskimi frontami*, 2002: 287).

The Romanian government did its best to improve the situation. A card system was introduced, but it was not effective enough either. The crisis spread not only to cities, but also to rural areas. Numerous army mobilizations led to labor shortage. As a result, out of 1,300 thousand hectares of land, 300 thousand were left uncultivated, which could lead to hunger and a demographic catastrophe (in particular, 70% of children born in 1917 did not live even a year) (*Za balkanskimi frontami*, 2002: 287). The majority of civilian population appeared below the poverty line. In addition, on the occupied Romanian territories, German administration carried out regular inspections of food and belongings. But even on the territories being under the control of the Romanian government, the situation was not much better. Here, in addition to state institutions, there were a large number of refugees, as well as army units (about half a million soldiers). In addition, a million-strong Russian army was dislocated, which continued to defend 4/5 of the Romanian front. The American Ambassador to Russia, D. Francis, expressed his

vision of the situation in a telegram to the Secretary of State: "The Romanian government is now supported by Russia, which is groaning under its own weight". He further noted that if Romania finds itself alone with its problems, the option of signing a separate peace treaty is entirely possible. The diplomat adhered to the idea of necessary financial support for the Romanian government with a monthly subsidy of \$ 10 million. He hoped that this might save the country, whose fate looked completely deplorable, if it finds itself without international (American) assistance (*Papers relating, 1932: 725*).

In addition to the aforementioned problems, the national liberation movement has intensified in the country, in particular on the territory of Bessarabia. Already in the first half of 1917, the idea of creating "Sfatul Cerium" (*Sfatul Țării*) was finally formed in the Moldovan environment. In the autumn of 1917, at a congress in Chisinau, the thought was voiced that it was "Sfatul Cerium" which should become a temporary supreme body of state power in Bessarabia until the Constituent Assembly is elected. It was the Council that was supposed to create a Moldovan army and begin activities "on preparing for the implementation of the autonomy of Bessarabia" (*Dykov, 1957: 60-62*). It should be noted that the situation was not unambiguous, since among the supporters of "Sfatul Cerium" there was no unity of opinion regarding the future legal status of Bessarabia. Some representatives stood for creation a personal autonomy within democratic Russia; others advocated the proclamation of independence, the third lobbied for the ideas of political and territorial unification with either Romania or Ukraine (*Benyuk, Nazariya, 2017: 28-57*).

Thus, by the second half of 1917, Romania found itself in an extremely difficult military-economic and political situation. It is worth mentioning that the Romanian government was very restrained in its assessment of the October revolution in Russia. For Bucharest, the change of power in Russia meant immediate cessation of support in the war against the Central Block. On October 25, A. Averescu wrote in his diary: "Quite disturbing news from Russia. The Provisional Government was attacked and overthrown by the maximalist revolutionaries... What will happen next? Civil War? What will the Germans do? What are we going to do?" (*Za balkanskimi frontami, 2002: 339*) On November 6, Minister of Internal Affairs A. Constantinescu (headed the Ministry in the most critical years for the country, December 11, 1916 – January 26, 1918) wrote: "We are here like on a volcano. I am afraid that all of us will be lost" (*Gheorghe, Șerbu, 2007: 179*). Gradually, the idea of urgent signing a peace treaty with Germany was becoming more and more popular.

In its desire to get out of the war, the Romanian government faced strong opposition of the Entente, primarily of France. In particular, Prime Minister G. Clemenceau and President R. Poincaré actually demanded that the allies "remain faithful to their obligations to the end", that is, to continue military operations despite losses (*Nazariya, 2013*). It is clear that the Romanians had a direct opportunity on the spot to assess the real cost of continuing to participate in the war, when the country had to bear all the brunt of hostilities. Whereas about 30% of the country's territory remained under the control of the government. The situation was not better for the front-line ally – Russia. While addressing G. Clemenceau, Prime Minis-

ter I. Brătianu stressed: "Not a separate unit, but the entire Russian army is under the influence of revolutionaries[...]. Most of the Cossack regiments in Bessarabia and elsewhere refused to oppose the Bolsheviks[...]. The Ukrainian Central Rada itself, not having at this time no significant army under its command, declared the need to sign an armistice and peace" (*Za balkanskimi frontami, 2002: 340-341*).

With this statement he made it clear to the Entente that the situation in Romania had become so critical that the only way out of the situation would be to sign a separate peace with Germany. At the same time, the Romanians refused to participate in negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. The reason was that although Romania was ready to sign an agreement with Germany, nevertheless, it continued to reckon with the Entente. To develop a further strategic line, on November 18 in Jassy, a Crown Council was convened with the participation of the Romanian military (A. Averescu, C. Presan, E. Grigorescu) and the Chief of the French military mission H. Berthelot. It was decided that if the Russian army of D. Shcherbachev left the front, the royal troops would also have to retreat. In his turn, on November 21, the Commander telegraphically requested sanctions from the Romanian allies regarding the signing of an armistice with Field Marshal Joseph August of Austria and Field Marshal A. von Mackensen. Having received this message, I. Brătianu telegraphed to Paris: "General Shcherbachev is facing an alternative: either to yield to the Bolsheviks, or to sign an armistice. In this case, resistance on the part of Romania will become impossible. Any other position of Romania will turn the Russian army in Bessarabia into a mass of millions of enemies led by maximalists" (*Za balkanskimi frontami, 2002: 341*). Meanwhile, the initiative of D. Shcherbachev enabled Romania to "save face" before the Entente and in the long term hope for a favorable attitude on its part. An utterly important task for Bucharest was to minimize the protest moods of its own citizens, for whom the war was extremely unpopular. It was also important that the government was able to begin the process of restoring the war-torn economy.

On November 22, the Council of Ministers decided on the need to sign an armistice with the Central Block. Soon, King Ferdinand I transferred the functions of the Commander-in-chief to General C. Presan. On November 24, negotiations began in Focșani, which completed by signing of an armistice between the parties (*Bol'sheviki, 1967: 242*). The agreements provided that in the event of a planned rejection of the ceasefire and start of hostilities, the parties would warn the opponent about it 72 hours before; the parties guaranteed each other not to take any preparatory actions for the subsequent offensive, as well as not to carry out work in order to strengthen and reinforce the existing positions; redeployment of troops was prohibited; a neutral zone between the armies was determined (in the area of the Danube delta, the Saint George Channel was considered as such); the neutral zone was considered a restricted area, and only unarmed access to it was allowed (*Bol'sheviki, 1967: 243-245*). The signed document was supposed to expire after an armistice would be signed along the entire frontage – from the Baltic to the Black Seas. During the talks in Focșani, the German delegation made an attempt to find out Romania's attitude to the ongoing parallel negotiations of the

Central Block powers with Bolshevik Russia and the UPR in Brest-Litovsk. The answer of the Head of Romanian delegation, General A. Lupescu, was concise – Romania adhered to the position of their non-recognition, which actually confirmed the suspicion of the Germans that the Romanians agreed to negotiate with the Central Block solely for tactical reasons.

At the same time, the strategic plans envisaged continuation of cooperation with the Entente. It was not by chance that, in fact simultaneously with negotiations with the Germans, the Romanian Ambassador in London offered the British leadership services of the royal army in the fight against the Bolsheviks. In their turn, the Entente countries were interested in keeping German and Austrian units at the Eastern Front as long as possible, thus preparing for a decisive strike at the Western Front. Colonel E. House left quite eloquent testimonies on this matter. On November 13, 1917, he noted in his diary that “coming of the Bolsheviks to power, if it led to a separate peace, would mean Germany gaining complete freedom in the redeployment of its troops, and, moreover, in large numbers from the East, and in result would establish superior numbers of the Germans at the Western Front – an advantage they had not had before from the first days of the war” (*Arkhiv, 2004: 129*). On November 21, during a meeting with D. Lloyd George and A. Balfour, E. House expressed the idea that the greatest thing they can do is to advise Romania to cooperate with all the belligerent allied forces that are geographically close to it. On November 23, Romania, for its participation in the struggle against the Bolsheviks, was promised support in its territorial claims to the lands of the former Russian Empire (*Mel'tyukhov, 2010: 26*).

Soon it was this diplomatic preference that gave Romania grounds to launch a military operation in Bessarabia. In addition, the Entente also rendered direct assistance to the Romanian army, to which General D. Shcherbachev forwarded weapons, ammunition and rations being at his disposal, for 16 million roubles. Meanwhile England and France tried their best to solve East-European problem though it became more complicated because of coming the Bolsheviks' coming to power. On December 23, 1917, in Paris they signed a secret convention, according to which Ukraine, Bessarabia and Crimea fell into the French sphere of influence. England secured the Caucasus, Transcaucasia and the Don lands (*Поренко, 2008: 86-87*). At the same time, Romania was gradually becoming one of the main allies of France in the entire Black Sea region opposing both the Bolsheviks and the Central Block, since the hopes for an alliance with the Ukrainian Central Rada did not justify themselves. It was at the insistence of the Head of the French military mission in Jassy, General H. Berthelot, that the Romanian government began active preparations for a military invasion in Bessarabia. Moreover, the military-political situation existing at that time in Ukraine inspired optimism, since the Ukrainian People's Republic de facto could not oppose anything to it. In early December, units of the royal army began to deepen into the Bessarabian lands, starting in fact an operation to seize the region. On January 3, 1918, the Council of Ministers made an official decision to annex Bessarabia, and the Entente provided support to Romania in the international arena. Although at the same time it was diplomatically emphasized that this

is “an exclusively military event, which aims at ensuring the normal functioning and maintenance of the Russian-Romanian front in accordance with the rules that are accepted by the countries at war. This in no way can affect the current and future policy of Bessarabia” (*Воріська, 1921: 159-160*).

Thus, the political leadership of the Entente, on the one hand, gave its fundamental consent to such actions, and on the other hand, it took no concrete internationally-legal hurried steps to recognize Romania's rights to the region (*Bule, 2012: 49*). At the same time, officials of the French military mission in Bessarabia carefully monitored all the processes taking place there and regularly provided Paris with detailed information about the actions of the Romanian military and civil administration.

It was also significant that, despite the critical situation in the country, the Romanian government did not give up the “Greater Romania” project. In particular, Romanian diplomacy presented the “Bessarabian problem” in the international arena as a purely internal problem of the Kingdom. Actually at all receptions and meetings, diplomats consistently proved Romania's exclusive right to these lands. Under those conditions when the European borders were about to be revised, the actions of the Romanians looked more than pragmatic. Moreover, as early as mid-January 1918, the Romanians regarded the “Bessarabian problem” as practically solved. In particular, on January 25, the representative of Romania in Washington C. Angelescu, addressing the US Secretary of State R. Lansing, mentioned that his government “in agreement with the government of the Moldavian Republic of Bessarabia and General Shcherbachev, Commander-in-chief of the Russian army” at the Romanian front, transferred Romanian troops to the disposal of the said government” (*Papers relating, 1932: 707*). At the same time, C. Angelescu stressed that it was a necessary step as response to growing anarchy in the region, which threatened food supply and lines of communication of the army (*Papers relating, 1932: 707*).

As Ambassador in Bucharest, Charles de Beauvoir, comte de Saint-Aulaire on January 24, confirmed that the introduction of the Romanian troops was a purely military step, therefore, it could not have any influence either on the current internal situation in the country or on the political future of Bessarabia. At the same time, conducting a military operation aimed at annexation of the region appeared to be more difficult than it had been planned. Realizing that it would not be possible to occupy Bessarabia with a small number of troops, from January 20, the Romanians passed on to a large-scale operation. The divisions of Generals E. Broșteanu and M. Skins were united in the separate Army Corps, which took the offensive on January 25. Together with the auxiliary detachments, the total number of the military contingent was about 50 thousand soldiers and officers. In the occupied areas, an appeal by General C. Presan, was made public, in which he assured that the Romanian troops would not offend a single inhabitant, no matter what nationality or religion he was. Just after the establishment of order, the Romanian warriors will return home (*Za balkanskimi frontami, 2002: 347*).

However, the realities of life demonstrated the populism of this appeal by the Commander of the Romanian troops. Referring to archival materials of the French Min-

istry of Foreign Affairs, contemporary French researcher Vincent Boulet reveals the facts of the Romanians' behavior on the occupied territories: "...when the latter entered Bessarabia, their behavior was more like the behavior of the German conquerors and was accompanied with all sorts of violence" (August 1918.); "the Romanians turned the population against themselves in every possible way: too cruel police beat people with sticks for and without reason, constant investigations, bribery, extortion, theft disguised as requisitions" (May 1919), etc (*Bule*, 2012: 50-52).

It should be noted that the Romanian political circles did not even hide the real purpose of the Bessarabian campaign. Sometime later (in 1920), speaking to the deputies of Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs T. Ionescu admitted that "it was something like a show[...]. In this difficult time, we assumed responsibility, we, the government, decided to enter Bessarabia[...]. But we did not enter there in order to save it from ruin – it was only a diplomatic move" (*Lungu*, 1979: 6). In 1921, the Minister spoke even more frankly: "The whole world knows that the troops sent to Bessarabia were sent in order to complete, when it is possible and as soon as possible, the final act of the annexation of Bessarabia. This is the truth" (*Lungu*, 1979: 47). In the end, the openly hostile policy of the Romanians caused resistance of the local population, and besides, the Romanians failed to occupy and control the entire territory of Bessarabia. Finally, it should be taken into consideration that southern Ukraine was under control of the Bolsheviks. Before long, the Romanian government was forced to begin peace negotiations with them, and the first contacts between the parties took place thanks to the mediation of the Entente military mission in Odessa. Negotiations resulted in the signing of an agreement that stipulated an obligation on the Romanian side to withdraw its troops from Bessarabia within two months, leaving only a 10,000-strong military contingent to ensure the protection of the region's railway communication; Romanians were to transfer all administrative and judicial bodies under the jurisdiction of local authorities; law-enforcement functions were passed under the local administration; the Romanian government committed itself not to interfere in the internal affairs of the region. For the further settlement of controversial issues, it was envisaged to create a special commission, which was to include representatives of Russia, Romania, England, France and the United States (*Dokumenty*, 1959: 210-211). On March 5, 1918, the document was signed by A. Averescu. On March 9 it was signed by H. Rakovsky, M. Brashevan, V. Yudovsky, A. Voronsky and M. Muravyov (*Nazariya*, 2014: 159).

Meanwhile, the situation in Ukraine has changed dramatically. The Austro-German troops, shortly after signing the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, by agreement with the Central Rada government, assumed the offensive, due to which the Bolsheviks were forced to retreat. Accordingly, the Agreement of March 5-9, which in literature is also called the "Averesku-Rakovsky Agreement", remained unfulfilled. This gave Romania every reason to continue the annexation of Bessarabia. Already at the end of March, representatives of Sfatul Cerium in Jassy were informed that "Bessarabia is too weak to exist separately," and therefore the procedure for its unification with Romania should be immediately started (*Marghiloman*,

1927: 444). On April 9, 1918, the act on the annexation of Bessarabia (with the rights of autonomy) to Romania was officially signed.

Almost simultaneously with these events, negotiations on signing a peace treaty, which was necessary for all parties, continued with the Central Block. Germany was actively preparing for a decisive offensive at the Western Front. Austria-Hungary was on the verge of collapse. Bulgaria, having been at war for almost six years, was in a catastrophic situation. A similar situation concerned the Ottoman Empire as well. It should be noted that the Central States were also interested in neutralizing the Eastern Front and partially satisfying territorial claims of the Romanians. Moreover, the latter already controlled significant territories. In addition, despite heavy losses and demoralization, the Romanian army continued to be a significant military force in the region. O. Czernin, in particular, later wrote about this: "It should be remembered that the belief, widespread among many circles, that Romanians are close to exhaustion and therefore will be forced to accept any conditions, is quite erroneous. The Romanians remained in fairly strong positions, the spirit of their army was high, and during the last big offensive at Mărășești units of Mackensen's army suffered heavy losses". The Austrian politician also focused on the fact that the Romanians were counting not so much on military success as on the ability to hold out on defensive positions until the successes of their Western allies bring them victory (*Czernin*, 1923: 279-280). At the same time, the Entente continued to remain a deterrent for the Romanian government. O. Czernin noted that the Romanians were afraid that by signing peace with the Central Block, they would find themselves in the disfavor of the Entente "thus losing its friendship, while they would fail to find ours, in other words, they would appear to fall between two stools" (*Czernin*, 1923: 280).

On February 5, A. Averescu, A. Mackensen, R. Kühlmann and O. Czernin held talks in Bucharest regarding the possibility of signing peace between the parties. Most of the controversy between the participants was caused by the territories of South and North Dobrudja. Austrian representatives insisted on these lands to be taken away from Romania. On February 27, O. Czernin held negotiations on this matter with the Romanian King Ferdinand I. To all arguments of the monarch that "Romania will suffocate without access to the sea", he replied that Romania must accept either an honorable peace, or the events will become irreversible for it. On returning to Jassy, the Romanian monarch was forced to convene the Crown Council. According to eyewitnesses, the proposed conditions caused outrage and hot discussions among Romanian politicians. However, the result of the Council meetings was coming to a decision on the need to sign a peace agreement.

On March 5, the Romanian Minister of Justice C. Argetoianu signed a preliminary agreement with the Central Block in Buftea. According to the Document, Romania undertook to: immediately demobilize eight divisions; abandon Dobrudja in favor of Austria-Hungary (instead, it received a trade outlet to the Black Sea through this territory); Romania agreed to the re-identification of borders in favor of Austria-Hungary; Romanians pledged to expel a French military mission from the country. Thus, the first step was taken to put an end to the war. At the

same time, the terms of the signed agreement were rather ambiguously perceived by the parties. The Romanians considered it to be a betrayal of national interests; Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire also expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that their interests were plainly ignored.

On April 24 (May 7), the Romanian delegation headed by A. Marghiloman signed the Bucharest Peace Treaty. Actually, the Treaty itself was a collection of 23 documents of political, legal, military, economic, technical, financial and transport contents. It was this Treaty which put an end to the war between the parties. It is worth mentioning that after signing the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, the only state that remained at war with the Central Block at the Eastern Front was Romania. According to the terms of the Treaty, Romania was to return Southern Dobrudja, obtained under the 1913 agreement, to Bulgaria; Northern Dobrudja down-stream the Danube to its confluence with the Black Sea along the Saint George Channel, was withdrawn under the joint control of the Central Powers (in fact, under the control of Germany – *authors*); other channels of the Danube remained under the control of Romania; in addition, it was promised the use of the Cernavodă – Constanța railway trade communication; Austria-Hungary received all main Carpathian passes, salt, coal and oil deposits. Romania was to demobilize most of the army, retaining only eight divisions (excluding the four divisions dislocated on the territory of Bessarabia) (*The Peace of Bucharest, 1918*).

The main part of the agreement was made up of economic issues. In particular, the Romanian government had to compensate for all the costs of maintaining German troops on the territory of Romania; to compensate all material losses for the lost property of citizens of the Central Powers; pay for the maintenance of the Romanian prisoners of war in German and Austrian captivity, etc. Separately, the contract regulated the “oil issue” as well. The “black gold” trade was envisaged to be transferred into the hands of a joint-stock company, where Austro-German capital would be of main importance; Romanians pledged to purchase oil exclusively from the established monopoly. Thus, the entire Romanian energy system appeared under German control for a period of 90 years. The treaty also contained other provisions that actually turned the country into a semi-colonial territory. In particular, a separate clause provided for the mandatory sale of surplus food in the country at fixed prices. In fact, the only significant achievement for Romania was the consent of the allies to the annexation of Bessarabia.

After signing the Bucharest Treaty, its text had to be approved by the Romanian Parliament and the King. While there were no problems with the Parliament, the monarch took a long pause, trying to gain time as much as possible. Neither government pressure on Ferdinand I nor daily reminders from the Prime Minister helped to interrupt it. As it turned out, it was this position that became the most advantageous for Romania, since at this time Germany and its allies were rapidly approaching the final defeat. On June 18, French General F. d’Espèrey was appointed Commander-in-chief of the Entente forces in the Balkans. Already in September, he managed to defeat the enemy on the Salonica front and launch an offensive towards the Danube. As a result of the offensive, Bulgaria withdrew from the war. In October, the Ottoman Empire ceased resistance, and Austria-Hungary came close to its collapse.

Meanwhile, in Romania itself, changes were taking place that led to the fall of the pro-German government of A. Marghiloman. The new Cabinet of Ministers was headed by C. Coandă, who, after his appointment, said: “We have the greatest interest in coming to a common peace together with our allies (the Entente – *authors*)” (*Gakman, 2004: 76*). Soon the Romanian government presented A. Mackensen with an ultimatum on immediate withdrawal of subordinate to him troops from the territory of the Kingdom. On October 27 (November 9), he was handed a diplomatic note on the denunciation of the Bucharest Peace. In a matter of days, Romania managed to return to the camp of victorious states in the World War.

Conclusions

Thus, there is every reason to assert that the expansionist policy of royal Romania during the first decades of the twentieth century was not unpredictable or spontaneous. It was implemented by the political leadership of the country within the framework of state ideology of the creation of “Greater Romania”. In general, the entire foreign policy of the kingdom during the First World War and especially after its completion became indicative in terms of defending its own national interests and gaining the status of a leader in the Balkan region. The very idea of uniting the Romanian nation originated in Transylvania and gradually spread over time to Moldavia and Wallachia. It was in Wallachia where it finally took shape as the ideology of consolidation of all Eastern Romanesque peoples.

Having gained independence, the Romanian leadership rather quickly assessed the advantages of the geopolitical location of the state. In particular, it was Romania that blocked the way for the Russian Empire to spread its influence in the Balkans. Moreover, the Romanian leadership was gradually introducing the assertion that Bucharest is the “guardian of Western civilization” at the mouth of the Danube and upheld the idea of the “selectivity of the autochthonous Romanians”.

By the beginning of the World War, the ideology of Greater Romania provided for the incorporation of the lands of Southern Dobrudja, Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia into the kingdom. It was those lands which became the main goal of Bucharest’s foreign policy in the first quarter of the new century. The very beginning of the war was perceived by the leadership of royal Romania as a real opportunity to continue the policy of expanding the country’s territory. At the same time, the Romanian leaders clearly understood that its implementation would become possible only by means of the diplomatic balancing between the countries of the Central Block and the Entente.

Constantly fluctuating in its sympathies between the Entente and the Central Block, Romania eventually became able to take a direct part in the creation of a new state-political configuration of Europe at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Moreover, taking advantage of the internal political situation in the lands of the former Russian Empire, which was facing a civil war, Romania, with the help of the Entente, began to consider itself a kind of a “protector” of Europe against the penetration of the Bolshevik ideology further to the west. In return, the Entente actually transferred Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina, and the part of Banat under the control of Romania.

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Ярослав Попенко,

*Мелітопольський державний педагогічний університет ім. Б. Хмельницького (м. Мелітополь, Україна)
e-mail: popenkoaroslav80@gmail.com, ORCID 0000-0003-0841-0875*

Ігор Срібняк,

*Київський університет імені Бориса Грінченка (м. Київ, Україна)
e-mail: i.sribniak@kubg.edu.ua, ORCID 0000-0001-9750-4958*

Наталя Яковенко,

*Київський національний університет імені Т. Шевченка (м. Київ, Україна)
e-mail: zaliznaledi@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0002-3493-5950*

Віктор Матвієнко,

*Київський національний університет імені Т. Шевченка (м. Київ, Україна)
e-mail: vikmaryuniv@ukr.net, ORCID 0000-0002-0012-5175*

«...ДОСЯГТИ ЗАГАЛЬНОГО МИРУ РАЗОМ З НАШИМИ СОЮЗНИКАМИ»: ЗОВНІШНЬОПОЛІТИЧНЕ БАЛАНСУВАННЯ РУМУНІЇ ПІД ЧАС ПЕРШОЇ СВІТОВОЇ ВІЙНИ

У статті здійснена спроба реконструкції основних напрямів зовнішньої політики Румунії, яка була змушена до балансування між двома потужними військово-політичними блоками – Центральним союзом та Антантою, разом з тим плекаючи план створення «Великої Румунії». Останній передбачав анексію тих земель, де проживало румунське населення, у т.ч. Буковини та Бессарабії. Не в стані здійснити драматичний вибір на початку війни і приєднатись до одного з протиборчих блоків – румунський уряд вдався до оголошення нейтралітету з метою акумулювання ресурсів. Ситуація змінилась у влітку 1915 р., коли Антанта значно активізувала свої зусилля, намагаючись залучити Румунію до свого складу. Для цього Англія і Франція погоджувалися акцептувати румунські територіальні претензії (в Трансильванії, Буковині, Банаті та ін.). Ця поступливість спонукала офіційний Бухарест докласти всіх зусиль для проведення морально-психологічної підготовки власних громадян у питанні бажаності (і навіть необхідності) вступу Королівства до війни, аргументуючи це потребою порятунку національної економіки. Але у двобої з німецькою та австро-угорською арміями румунські війська зазнали тяжкої поразки, і лише допомога російської армії врятувала Румунію від капітуляції. В ситуації революціонування вояків російської армії у 1917 р. остання пішла на підписання сепаратної угоди з Центральним блоком. Більше того, Румунія у слушний момент денонсувала цю угоду та повернулася до складу Антанти. Зрештою, саме завдяки таким «хитанням» румунський уряд спромігся ефективно відстоювати національні інтереси та значно розширити територіальні межі Румунії.

Ключові слова: Перша світова війна, дипломатія, анексія, Центральний блок, Антанта, король Кароль I, Румунія.

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