

# NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN ASPECTS OF HISTORY, DIPLOMACY AND POLITICS

## LOUIS BARTHOUS – ON A DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO SECURE AN “ORIENTAL AGREEMENT” (1934)

Marusia CÎRSTEA\*

**Abstract:** The article is founded on a number of unpublished documents and it highlights the fact that the French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou had a plan of negotiation for an “*Oriental Agreement*”, based on the principle of collective security. To accomplish this goal, in 1934 Barthou went on a tour of several countries in Eastern Europe (Poland and Czechoslovakia in April, Romania and Yugoslavia in June). Through these – summit – meetings, Barthou hoped to prepare a rapprochement between The Soviet Union, Poland and the Little Agreement, which, together with the Balkan Agreement, was meant “*to constitute a new policy of Central and Oriental Europe, guaranteeing peace in Eastern Europe*”.

**Keywords:** Oriental Agreement, Romania, France, Louis Barthou, Nicolae Titulescu.

In the fourth decade of the last century – following the emergence from the global economic crisis – the European balance of power underwent important changes: the establishment of the Nazi regime in Germany (30<sup>th</sup> January 1933); the ascent of revisionist and revanchist forces in several European countries; the involvement of the Soviet Union in the continental security arrangements; the disagreements between Paris and London as regards the priorities of European security; the weaknesses of the League of Nations, which failed to prevent the march to war; the conclusion of agreements between countries that wanted the increasing danger of Nazi Germany to be reduced and pursued the preservation of the territorial *status-quo* (“*The Eastern Agreement*”, “*The Balkan Pact*”, “*The Little Entente*” et al.)<sup>1</sup>.

During this period, the French diplomats and politicians seemed to be the most fervent supporters of the plan to conserve the borders established in the Treaties of Versailles and Sevres. Through the insistence of politicians like Louis

---

\* Associate Professor, PhD, University of Craiova, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of History, Political Sciences and International Relations; E-mail: cirsteamara@yahoo.com

<sup>1</sup> *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VIII, *România Întregită (1918–1940)*, Ioan Scurtu (coordinator), Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing, 2003, pp. 481–493; Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Istoria relațiilor internaționale. 1919–1947*, vol. I, translated by Anca Airinei, Bucharest, Social and Political Sciences Publishing, 2006, pp. 131–133; Marusia Cîrstea, Gheorghe Buzatu, *Europa în balanța forțelor*, vol. I (1919–1939), Bucharest, Mica Valahie Publishing, 2007, pp. 45–50.

Barthou, the French tenaciously pursued the conclusion of treaties whose “objective was to tie up Germany by associating her in the defence of the Oriental frontiers which she will recognize *de facto* [...] offering Hitler an additional chance to turn a principle in his favour”<sup>2</sup>. A diplomatic document in 1934 highlighted the following idea: “France is the powerful defender of treaties, the protector of small countries, the only nation capable to guarantee the current order in Europe provided she preserves her military strength intact”<sup>3</sup>.

In 1934, Jean-Louis Barthou was the French Foreign Minister, whose actions pursued the preservation of the post-war *status-quo* and the provision of collective security in Europe. Born on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1862 in a family of republicans, he occupied in time several political functions (starting with 1894 he worked for a variety of ministers, holding portfolios in the Ministry of Public Works, National Defence, during 1913–191 he was the president of the Council; in February 1934 he was the Foreign Minister “*due to his vast experience and his profound patriotism*”)<sup>4</sup>.

In his new quality – of Foreign Minister – Louis Barthou had a plan which he hoped would diminish the growing danger represented by Nazi Germany. His intention was to negotiate an ‘*Oriental Agreement*’, founded on the principle of collective security. To secure this objective, Louis Barthou undertook to enlarge the scope of European alliances as a means to safeguard peace and security – central to these preoccupations was, of course, France’s security. On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1934, Barthou was in possession of a scheme – put together by the Political Direction – which envisaged a pact of agreement in Oriental Europe. The document proposed a “regional pact of mutual assistance, that would include Poland, the USSR, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic countries and Germany”<sup>5</sup>. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1934, Barthou presented to the Soviet commissar for Foreign Affairs, Maksim Litvinov, his “*scheme*” which comprised a cluster of three treaties: 1 – “The Oriental Pact” (a kind of “Oriental Locarno”), which envisaged a reciprocal guarantee between the above mentioned neighbouring countries as well as immediate military support in case of an aggression; 2 – a Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance (by which France promised, within the limits of the Locarno treaties, to provide assistance to the Soviet Union with a view to guaranteeing its Western borders, while the Soviets promised to provide assistance to France); the third document represented a

---

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Michel Gaillard, Anthony Rowley, *Istoria continentului european. De la 1850 până la sfârșitul secolului al XX-lea*, translated by Em. Galaicu-Păun, Chișinău, Cartier Publishing, 2001, p. 314.

<sup>3</sup> Viorica Moisuc, *Premisele izolării politice a României. 1919–1940*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing, 1991, p. 281; Georgiana-Margareta Scurtu, *Din istoria diplomației europene. Relațiile României cu Franța (1935–1938)*, Bucharest, Cartea Universitară Publishing, 2006, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Viorica Moisuc, *Louis Barthou (1862–1934)*, in *Diplomați iluștri*, vol. V, Bucharest, Politică Publishing, 1986, pp. 308–313.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 342.

“warrant” that “the agreements between the respective countries shall be based on Articles 15 and 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations”<sup>6</sup>.

This planned “*Oriental Agreement*” was applauded by the “English politicians”, though it was stated that “England shall not, under any circumstances, undertake additional commitments after the ones she has already entered”<sup>7</sup>. During the 13<sup>th</sup> of July meeting in the House of Commons, Sir John Simon – secretary of state with the Foreign Office – “provided explanations about his conversations with Barthou” and emphasised that “the drafted Oriental Agreement, being an instrument of mutual guarantee of the borders between the parties and not the formation of a new political group meant to oppose one which already exists, the British government agrees to lend this project all the moral its support”<sup>8</sup>. Then Sir John Simon insisted on the fact that “this moral support does not entail any kind of new commitments for Great Britain apart from the ones that already exist as a result of the treaties which are effective. It is not less true, however, that the British endeavours in Berlin and Warsaw to secure their cooperation in the Oriental Agreement had more powerful repercussions that the simply platonic support advertised to the English public opinion”<sup>9</sup>.

The ‘wait-and-see’ strategy of the British politicians in the case of the Oriental Agreement was also analysed by C.M. Laptew (the Romanian chargé d’affaires in the London Legation) who conveyed the following on 2<sup>nd</sup> August: “The English political circles are watching with interest the ongoing debates for the conclusion of an *Oriental Locarno*. The prevailing idea is that Great Britain should facilitate the conclusion of this pact but not, under any circumstances, undertake new commitments. In London it is considered that Germany would now have the best occasion to obtain equal rights by joining this pact and thus proving the earnestness of its good intentions. London political circles realize too well the difficulties that forestall this pact. The Memel and Vilna matters make negotiations difficult. However, the general mood is rather optimistic, in spite of the reserve displayed by Germany and Poland. With all the distrust that Great Britain manifests toward Moscow’s political initiatives, the success of Mr. Litvinov’s diplomacy is acknowledged in London. The Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs managed to secure the support of the British government in the form of intercessions made in Berlin, Rome and Warsaw “in the attempt to conclude the Oriental Agreement”<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *op. cit.*, p. 133; Constantin Vlad, *Istoria diplomației. Secolul XX*, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing, 2014, p. 108.

<sup>7</sup> The Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, Bucharest (hereinafter: AMAE), fond 71/Anglia, vol. 3/1934, f. 174; Ion Pătroi, Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, *România și Anglia în anii '30*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc Publishing, 1997, pp. 71–72.

<sup>8</sup> AMAE, fond 71/Anglia, vol. 3/1934, f. 175.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> Idem, fond 71/România, vol. 45/1934, f. 91; Idem, fond Londra, vol. 71/1934, unpaginated.

The same Laptew reported on 22<sup>nd</sup> August that – according to information he had obtained from an official source – “the matter of the conclusion of the Oriental Agreement continues to be dubious. In any case, in London it is believed that it is no longer possible to conclude a pact in accordance with the initial provisions conceived by France and that, in order for Poland to participate in this pact, France will be forced to make certain concessions, such as not asking Poland, and by implication Germany, when one of these countries should remain neutral in case of an aggression, to permit the transit or foreign troops across their respective territories. London also thinks that if in the end Poland should decline participation in the Oriental Agreement, France will attempt a tripartite Agreement with Russia and Czechoslovakia, in order to avoid the conclusion of a Franco-Russian Agreement that would be more of an alliance, which, as it is known, would not please either Great Britain or Italy”<sup>11</sup>.

The countries of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente “expressed their full adherence to France’s constructive initiatives of concluding an ‘Oriental Agreement’”<sup>12</sup>.

To accomplish his new objective – of concluding the “*Oriental Agreement*” – in 1934 Louis Barthou visited several countries in Eastern Europe – Poland and Czechoslovakia in April; Romania and Yugoslavia in June; but his endeavours were characterized by Winston Churchill as an attempt to “forge again the balance of forces which existed before the [First] World War”<sup>13</sup>. The French press also emphasised that “Mr. Barthou’s visit to Poland had a larger purpose, to prepare a rapprochement between the Soviets, Poland and the Little Entente which, together with the Balkan Entente, may constitute a new policy for Central and Oriental Europe, guaranteeing peace in the East of Europe”<sup>14</sup>.

In Romania, Louis Barthou commences his diplomatic mission in the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> June, “the main theme of his visit being [...] safeguarding Romania’s borders and resisting any revision of the Treaty of Trianon”<sup>15</sup>. His first stop on Romanian territory was in the train station in Cluj, where – as reported in *Gazeta Ilustrată*<sup>16</sup> (June-July 1934 issue) – “a few thousand people, intellectuals and peasants from the area, dressed in beautiful traditional outfits” welcomed him whole-heartedly. On the same day he arrived in Bucharest, where he was invited “to a great banquet and reception at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs”. In his

<sup>11</sup> Idem, fond Londra, vol. 71/1934, unpaget; Idem, fond 71/România, vol. 45/1934, f. 98.

<sup>12</sup> Em. Bold, I. Ciupercă, *Europa în derivă (1918–1940). Din istoria relațiilor internaționale*, second edition, Iași, Casa Editorială Demiurg Plus, 2010, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Sorin Cristescu, *Relații politico-diplomatice și militare europene*, Bucharest, Romania of Tomorrow Foundation Publishing, 2007, p. 90.

<sup>14</sup> Andrei Nicolescu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Ion Pătroiu, Alesandru Duțu, Alexandru Oșca, *Atașaii militari transmit... (1930–1940)*, vol. V, Bucharest, 2009, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> The National Archives, Richmond, Kew, U.K. (hereinafter: TNA), fond Foreign Office 371/Roumania, vol. 18446/1934, f. 49.

<sup>16</sup> For details, see [http://documente.bcuccluj.ro/web/bibdigit/periodice/gazetaillustrata/1934/BCUCLUJ\\_FP\\_279699\\_1934\\_003\\_006\\_007.pdf](http://documente.bcuccluj.ro/web/bibdigit/periodice/gazetaillustrata/1934/BCUCLUJ_FP_279699_1934_003_006_007.pdf)

welcome speech, Nicolae Titulescu described the warm friendship that connects Romania and France and emphasised the need for security that would guarantee peace in Europe<sup>17</sup>. “Today, when our countries’ foreign policy pursues common goals – underscored Titulescu – we have reached that stage in our friendship where it is no longer necessary to speak in order to understand each other, or take counsel in order to act unitedly. In broad daylight, our countries have found their equilibrium. And Romania has nothing to hide and can publicly state the reasons that connect her unwaveringly to France. We love France for having built her international relations upon the equality of all nations and the rule according to which no country’s interests can be disposed of without the respective country’s volition. We love France because she organises her entire foreign action upon a scrupulous respect of international commitments, which lends clarity and stability to the rapports between peoples, in the absence of which we could not conceive organised life [...] Our shared notions of peace, justice and international cooperation are the most solid guarantees of this future [...] As far as peace is concerned, France and the Little Entente are avid for it, because their history has experienced a sequence of chapters involving the horrors of war. Yet, our countries know that peace is only a futile word unless it is built upon the sole foundation that can sustain a lasting peace, and that is security”<sup>18</sup>.

In his own speech, Louis Barthou emphasised the support that France gave to Romania’s resistance to the revision of treaties and highlighted the following: “Your territory belongs to you. Anyone wishing to seize a square centimetre of it will encounter your resistance. However, citizens of Romania, your resistance will not be isolated; you will have the voice, the help and the heart of France at your side [...] *Revision* is equal to abdication or treason, which no Romanian citizen would ever permit [...] We are soldiers of peace, but not peace secured with the price of an abdication. We desire a peace that maintains the rights we have won legitimately. Who will answer the call? France and Romania! We are the soldiers of the liberty of humankind, that humankind whose symbols, guarantees and defenders are our countries”<sup>19</sup>.

At the same time, after thanking for “the warm welcome” which the entire country gave him, he also eulogised Mr. Titulescu’s recent political decisions which resulted in the creation of an area of peace, stretching from Prague to Angora. He is here to communicate France’s message of friendship and encouragement, and the presence in Bucharest of three foreign ministers of the Little Entente [Nicolae Titulescu, Edvard Beneš, Bogoliub Jeftić – a.n.] makes his visit more than mere ‘politesse,’ transforming it into ‘politique”<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> TNA, fond Foreign Office 371/Roumania, vol. 18446/1934, f. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Nicolae Titulescu, *Documente diplomatice*, Bucharest, Pedagogic Publishing, 1967, doc. 319, pp. 562–563.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, fond Foreign Office 371/Roumania, vol. 18446/1934, f. 54.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 31.

In Bucharest Louis Barthou was also invited to attend a solemn meeting of the Romanian Academy – with the participation of the great historian Nicolae Iorga, who announced that the eminent French politician was made a ‘membre d’honneur’ of this institution. King Carol II then accompanied the illustrious guest “on a visit to the Carol Foundation, where he was appointed an honorary member of the Royal Society of Geography”<sup>21</sup>.

In the summer of 1934, referring to his visits in East-European capitals, Louis Barthou issues a press release in which he emphasised the following: “Successful voyages do not have a history. Such are the voyages I made to Romania and Yugoslavia... It is obvious that adherence to treaties represents the condition and guarantee of enduring peace... The revisionist policy is not only unfair and contrary to the desires of the nations, it is also fraught with peril and carries inside it the seeds of war. By opposing revisionism in the memorable session of the Romanian Parliament, I articulated the traditional policy of France”<sup>22</sup>.

In the summer and the autumn of 1934, Louis Barthou further pursued his policy of consolidating French alliances and to this purpose he invited King Alexander I of Yugoslavia to France. On 9<sup>th</sup> October, the sovereign arrived in Marseille, where he was received by Louis Barthou. A few seconds later, the two were assassinated. After the assassination of Barthou and Alexander I, the member states of the Little Entente, reunited in Belgrade on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1934, expressed their profound indignation and concern for the terrorist act, pointing to foreign (German) involvement in the domestic affairs of other states<sup>23</sup>. Diplomatic endeavours – aimed at concluding an *Oriental Agreement* – continued in 1935, when several treaties of non-aggression were signed between France, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, achievements in which the great Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu also played a part. He wanted a mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union, which would have been part of a series of such agreements in Eastern Europe.

## Appendices

- 1 -

21<sup>st</sup> June, 1934

Telegram (en clair) from Sir G. Clerk (Paris)

Press today makes a great feature of Monsieur Barthou’s visit to Bucharest and, as in the case of his visit to Poland emphasizes the immense enthusiasm with which he has everywhere been received.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 68.

<sup>22</sup> Apud Geneviève Tabouis, *20 de ani de tensiune diplomatică*, Bucharest, Politică Publishing, 1965, p. 199.

<sup>23</sup> Em. Bold, I. Ciupercă, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

It is observed that both Messieurs Beneš and Jevtitch were at Bucharest the very day on which Monsieur Barthou arrived in the capital, which must be read as an indication of the present solidarity of the Little Entente and the strength of its ties with France. Monsieur Barthou's speech at the banquet given to him last night by Monsieur Titulescu is warmly praised as showing how essentially pacific are the aims of both France and the Little Entente. The visit will afford a further proof, it is maintained, that France is not pursuing a policy of encirclement and that she is looking for no political supremacy since she has made it clear that neither she nor her friends will reject any overture honestly made to her, and the wider the scope of the various pacts now in being or in contemplation the better is the prospect of European peace.

TNA, fond Foreign Office 371/Roumania, vol. 18446/1934, f. 26.

- 2 -

British Legation  
Bucharest, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1934

Confidential  
Mr. Palairt to Sir John Simon

Sir,

Shortly after the French Minister for Foreign Affairs had crossed the Roumanian frontier on the morning of June 20<sup>th</sup>, it became clear that the main theme of his visit was to be the maintenance of Romania within her present borders and resistance to any form of revision of the Treaty of Trianon. At the station of Cluj, where he was received by the major and by all the notabilities (civil, military and ecclesiastical) of the town, Monsieur Barthou said that his first words spoken on Roumanian soil, as the Foreign Minister of France, should be a greeting to the unity of Roumania which had been definitely conquered. Romania was, he said, a guarantee of peace and stability, not only in the Balkans, but in the whole of Europe.

You will already have received, Sir, the text of the speeches exchanged at the evening's banquet between Monsieur Titulescu and Monsieur Barthou which I had the honour to transmit to you. You will have observed that the former made use of the following words: "Nous voulons la paix et nous la voulons juste. Mais nous sommes heureux de constater que pour la France comme pour nous la justice a une limite qui s'appelle l'ordre, et que la France ne considère pas comme un commandement de la justice, la résurrection des injustices abolies." Monsieur Barthou's reply to this phrase took the following form: "Egalement respectueux de l'indépendance et de la dignité des autres nations, nos deux pays, qui tiennent pour

fixées à jamais les limites que le droit leur a assignées, ne sauraient admettre même l'idée d'une atteinte portée à leur patrimoine. Le secret de notre amitié et de notre alliance n'est pas ailleurs." And, at the end of his speech, he made a point of proclaiming that his visit represented not a "politesse", but a "politique".

In his interviews with the Roumanian press, Monsieur Barthou was even more explicit on the question of the intangibility of the frontiers of Roumania and the inviolability of the Treaty of Trianon, and revision of which he qualified as an "abdication." The interview given by him in this sense to the *Adevărul* seems to have caused surprise in Hungary.

Yesterday's meeting of Parliament represented the "fortissimo" in this crescendo of anti-revisionist fervour. It must, I think, have surprised even those who were prepared for a spectacular outburst of enthusiasm. The Chamber of Deputies and all its galleries were crowded, and all the heads of missions were present in the diplomatic box. Monsieur Barthou's entry with Monsieur Titulescu was, naturally, hailed with prolonged applause, and it was some time before the President of the Senate was able to deliver his address of welcome, which was followed by that of the President of the Chamber. Monsieur Titulescu, who, on rising to speak, was acclaimed almost as enthusiastically as Monsieur Barthou himself, then delivered a most eloquent address, recalling the historic events of which the Chamber had been the scene in the past and reviewing Franco-Romanian relations in connection with the war. I shall have the honour to forward to you the French text of this and of other speeches (for they were all spoken in the French language), but a brief résumé of his Excellency's declarations will not be out of place here. Peace, he said, had not brought with it the tranquillity for which Roumania had hoped. Hardly had the Treaty of Trianon been signed, when voices were heard claiming, on the grounds of justice, the amputation of Romania's national patrimony – not in the name of right, but in the name of appearances created by centuries of foreign oppression. For a thousand years their blood-brothers had been kept under the yoke, and now only seven years had passed since the signature of the instruments restoring them to Roumania, and already it was proclaimed that treaties were not eternal. "This time," he cried, "we have the right to answer." Turning to Monsieur Barthou, Monsieur Titulescu continued: "Monsieur le Président, in the name of the Roumanian nation I must proclaim in your presence and in the face of the world that if anyone imagines that he should be asked to yield one square metre of the national territory we now possess, the invariable answer of the Roumanians will be: No, No, Never!". These words were received with frenzied applause, the whole assembly rising to its feet and cheering for several minutes. Monsieur Titulescu then referred to Monsieur Barthou's declarations, immediately upon entering the country, that Roumania must live for ever within her present frontiers, and also to the words which I have quoted from the latter's speech at the banquet on the 20<sup>th</sup> June. He expressed his profound satisfaction at the prospect of hearing the voice of France, personified by her Minister for Foreign Affairs, proclaim from that tribune the sacred, definite and



intangible character of Romania’s national unity, and ended by declaring that, between those who made a dogma of the intangibility of Romania’s frontiers and those who made a dogma of the progressive and systematic mutilation of Roumania, the latter had no choice.

I do not propose to summarize the speeches by leaders of all the different political parties which followed. To do so would prolong this dispatch unduly; it is sufficient to say that one and all were eulogies of France in general and of Monsieur Barthou in particular, and that all expressed sentiments of undying gratitude and affection towards their great “Latin sister”. I shall forward to you the French text of these speeches, which will no doubt be published in the *Indépendance Romaine*. To the foreign onlooker the varying receptions accorded by the audience to the different speakers was of considerable interest. Monsieur Constantin Brătianu, the leader of Liberals, was, of course, received with enthusiasm, though his delivery was far from inspiring. Monsieur Mihalache, who spoke on behalf of the National Peasants, who also given a cordial reception; but Monsieur Argetoianu was received with hisses (no doubt on account of his share in the recent attempt to put Marshal Averescu in power) and Monsieur Cuza, of anti-Semitic notoriety, with open ridicule. Monsieur George Brătianu and Monsieur Goga were allowed to ascend the tribune in complete silence.

At the close of these speeches, Monsieur Tătărescu, the President of the Council, came forward amidst cordial applause and, after a most eloquent testimony to the glories of France and the merits of Monsieur Barthou, declared that Roumania only wished to preserve and defend what was hers by right. “We consider as closed the era of historic injustice; we consider peace to be the supreme good, war to be the supreme offence. We are, and we wish to remain, the soldiers of peace”. His Excellency closed his speech by proposing the following motion: “The Senate and Chamber united proclaim Louis Barthou a citizen of honour of Romania”. This motion was put to the Houses by the President of the Senate and passed by acclamation amidst scenes of almost delirious enthusiasm, only interrupted to allow Monsieur Barthou himself to speak.

The French Foreign Minister was, amongst the many speakers of the afternoon, the only one who did not read his speech. He spoke without notes of any kind, though not, it is to be supposed, without careful premeditation. I will not dwell on the more personal parts of his speech in which he referred to his own career and convictions. He passed from them to emphasize the historical intimacy between the two countries and his appreciation of the extraordinary cordiality and affection with which he had been received as the messenger of France. He then referred to his interview with King Carol, with whom he had that day taken luncheon. The King had, he said, expressed to him his deep sympathy for France. As the first citizen of his country, His Majesty had told him that there was no one more attached than himself to the friendship and alliance with France. This statement was received with prolonged applause. It was nothing, however, to the applause which followed Monsieur Barthou’s affirmations of French support of

Romania's resistance to treaty revision. His friend, Monsieur Titulescu had, he said, pronounced words in that assembly which had been greeted with unanimous acclamations. He then went on to declare as follows: "Your territory is yours. Whoever wishes to take a square centimetre of it (this intensification of Monsieur Titulescu's phrase was no doubt deliberate) will meet with your resistance. But, fellow-citizens of Roumania, your resistance will not be alone; you will have the voice, the help and the heart of France". After the deafening ovations produced by these words, Monsieur Barthou went on to say that the word "revision" meant abdication or treason which no Roumanian citizen could ever admit. He concluded his speech with a final affirmation of the solidarity existing between the two countries. "We are soldiers of peace; we desire peace, but not one bringing with it the risk of any abdication. We desire a peace which maintains the rights legitimately conquered. Who goes there? France and Roumania! We are the soldiers of liberty and do not mean to lose that liberty. We are the soldiers of humanity, of that humanity of which our countries are the symbol, the guarantee and the defence".

The Parliamentary ceremony was immediately followed by a reception in the library given by the President of the Chamber. I had the opportunity of speaking to Monsieur Titulescu for a moment in the crowd and of congratulating him on the eloquence of his speech. It had, I observed, been an historic meeting, to which he replied, in English, "It was very necessary". I hope later, when Monsieur Barthou has gone and Monsieur Titulescu has more leisure, to ascertain from him the meaning of his words. I cannot believe that Monsieur Goemboes' recent utterances, provocative as they may have been, should have necessitated this astonishingly public and vehement manifestation of Franco-Romanian resistance to treaty revision. Possibly the two Governments may be in possession of some information in regard to the Mussolini-Hitler interview which needs in their opinion an immediate and decisive retort. In any case, Monsieur Titulescu may be regarded as having scored another and very complete victory for his policy. It has indeed at once been recognized as such by the Roumanian press. He has obtained a public declaration that France will support Roumania against revisionism: he has succeeded in tightening the bonds between his country and France to such a degree that any attempt to undo them seems doomed to failure; while Monsieur Barthou's interview with King Carol and his public announcement of the King's attachment to France and the French alliance has committed His Majesty to a line of policy from which it will be very difficult for him to escape. After yesterday's scenes, any pro-German or pro-Italian tendencies on his part will antagonize public opinion more than ever. The publicity given to the King's interview with the representative of the "Petit Parisien" is another link in the chain. Monsieur Titulescu's position has been immensely strengthened.

As if the scene in Parliament were not enough, Monsieur Barthou, immediately after leaving the Chamber of Deputies, addressed the Roumanian nation on the wireless. He thanked his "beloved fellow-citizens" for the honour conferred upon him and for the welcome given him by the whole county. No

intrigues and no force could break the alliance between France and Roumania. France, he said, had by the Treaty of Versailles recovered in Alsace and Lorraine the territories belonging to her. Roumania’s territorial claims had also been satisfied by binding treaties. Neither she nor France would yield an inch of their soil. His words were, he said, not those of a mere traveller, but represented the unanimous view of the French Government. He was the messenger of France to Roumania, and on his return would be the messenger of Roumania to France, and would affirm the indissoluble character of the links binding the two countries to each other.

There would, it would seem, be little left to say on the subject of French solidarity with and support from Roumania. I will reserve for a later despatch, when I shall be in possession of fuller information, the examination of the question why it had to be said just now with such vehemence and precision. This despatch merely records, I fear at considerable length, the methods chosen to proclaim the solidarity. They have certainly been impressive, and the proceedings in the Chamber evoked in my mind memories of war-time manifestations and enthusiasms. All my colleagues were, I think, surprised at the scenes which they witnessed; and the Hungarian Minister must have been painfully impressed by the intensity of feeling shown. The German Minister left the diplomatic box, I am told, in the course of the proceedings.

I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty’s Minister at Budapest. The reaction in Hungary to the proceedings here will no doubt be immediate.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant,

Michael Palairet

TNA, fond Foreign Office 371/Roumania, vol. 18446/1934, ff. 49–57.

- 3 -

British Legation  
Bucharest, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1934

Confidential

Mr. Palairet to Sir John Simon

Sir,

The Franco-Roumanian symphony performed with so much *éclat* at Bucharest in the course of the last few days, closed yesterday morning with the departure from the capital of Monsieur Barthou, apparently unaffected by the incessant and fatiguing activities which have engaged him during his visit here. His final act was to give an interview in the train, after leaving Bucharest, to a

correspondent at the *Universul*. In my telegram No. 69 of today I have had the honour to report the most important feature of this interview, but the rest of His Excellency's remarks is worthy of a summary. After paying a tribute of admiration and gratitude to Roumania in general and to Monsieur Titulescu in particular, Monsieur Barthou went on to say that in the whole course of his long parliamentary career he had never taken part in a sitting to equal last Thursday's meeting of the Roumanian Parliament. It had, he said, been difficult for him to speak in reply to such a reception as had been given him. He had not prepared his speech, nor had he known what previous speakers would say; but after witnessing the complete unity of all parties in their sentiments for France, his emotion had been overpowering. "France shall know all this from me, and I assure you that Roumania may count on the friendship and support of France". A perfect harmony of views prevailed between the two countries, and Monsieur Titulescu and himself were always in perfect agreement; examples of this were the French Note of the 17<sup>th</sup> April and the French resolution at the Disarmament Conference on which their views were identical. It was clear to the world that France exercised no sort of tutelage over the *Little Entente*, and that their relations were founded on a real community of views (Monsieur Barthou has emphasized in other interviews the fact that he and Monsieur Titulescu departed from the usual practice and did not exchange beforehand the texts of their speeches at Wednesday's banquet). His visits to Roumania and Yugoslavia were manifestations of the solidarity existing between France and her allies. After paying a respectful and grateful homage to King Carol and to his loyal friendship for France, which His Majesty was to visit, at, he hoped, no distant date, Monsieur Barthou replied to questions on his approaching visit to London, which, he observed, he was undertaking on the invitation of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. A series of important questions – disarmament, control of armaments, guarantees, and the return of Germany to the League – would be discussed and, he hoped, solved. He had asked that the programme should be communicated to him on his return to Paris, in order to save time. (Monsieur Barthou made the same remark in conversation with me. He also expressed his regret at there having been any misunderstanding between you, Sir, and himself, and his satisfaction that that misunderstanding had been removed). The situation in Europe was, he said, so grave – he would not say tragic – that an understanding between France and England was necessary. When asked to explain why he took so grave a view of the European situation, Monsieur Barthou at first took refuge in generalities. Europe was, he said, in a state of confusion. Every country had internal and economical difficulties, and the countries who ought to be in agreement with each other failed to achieve that agreement. He knew, he said, that Herr Hitler had said that he did not want war – sincerely, as he personally believed – but, in order to maintain his situation in Germany, he needed a convention which would increase his strength and prestige. This would not, however, prevent an agreement with Germany, and if Herr Hitler's prestige could be made to harmonize with the interests of Europe, France was ready to sign a convention with her. France had, he said, serious

reasons for believing that Germany had armed far more than she admitted, and he had told Herr Ribbentrop in March that Germany’s peaceful words were in contradiction with her warlike activities. All these considerations had led him to remark that the European situation was serious. Fortunately, however, there were also reasons for optimism. The Balkan Pact had created a strong factor in the cause of peace and had been warmly welcomed as such by France. The latter was continuing the conversations begun last year with Russia. Their sole object was peace; they were not an attempt to encircle Germany, for the latter had been invited to take part on the same basis as Poland and Czechoslovakia. He also believed that a Mediterranean Pact would be in the interests of peace – which was the object of all the pacts being signed or projected. That was why he did not believe in the imminence of war. Neither France nor her allies wished for war. If every country had the same sincerity as they, there would be every chance of the peace of Europe remaining undisturbed. He was more anxious in respect of Asia, but he refused to be a prophet of ill, and conversations which he had had at Geneva had left him hopeful on the subject.

As I reported in my above-mentioned telegram, Monsieur Barthou referred one more to the question of revision. When asked if he had read in the newspapers the statements made in Budapest as to French leanings towards revisionism, Monsieur Barthou interrupted his interlocutor to say that when he was travelling he refrained from reading newspapers in order to preserve his entire “liberté d’esprit”, but that, since what had been said in the Hungarian Senate was now brought to his notice, he must give it a formal denial. France was not revisionist, and the Hungarian Prime Minister had mistaken a few isolated opinions for that of France and her Government. The speeches by Monsieur Beneš and Monsieur Titulescu on the subject had, he said, the approval of French public opinion: “Revision means war, and I repeat with all my force that France desires peace”. (These last words really summarize the results of Monsieur Barthou’s visit here). No one knew whither demands for revision might lead, and the policy of maintenance of the treaties was the only safeguard against dangerous adventures. He welcomed the renewal of diplomatic relations with Russia, and concluded the interview with a defence of democracy against dictatorships and a compliment to the beauty of Roumanian women.

At the risk of wearying you, Sir, with the subject, I feel obliged to give you some idea of the intensive programme to which Monsieur Barthou was subjected during his stay here. At his age, he must have found it exhausting, yet he appears to have preserved his energy, good humour and vivacity throughout. I cannot say that he made an agreeable impression on me, and I thought the tone of his speech in the Roumanian Parliament needlessly violent and provocative. It seemed to me in particular most unfortunate to compare that assembly to the French Parliament which acclaimed a Government for rejecting proposals “unworthy of France” and accepting a war which had been forced upon her. His repetition of the cry of 1914 – “Toute la France pour toute la guerre!” – provoked the enthusiastic applause of the

excited assembly, but seemed to the foreign onlooker singularly out of place. One might have supposed that the Hungarian armies were already massing for the invasion of Transylvania, whereas Roumania has never been more secure than now against attack from any side. These are, however, aspects of the visit which must be discussed with Monsieur Titulescu. He has gone away for the week-end, the rest on the shores of the Black Sea after his strenuous week in Bucharest; but on his return I shall seek an interview with him.

The French Minister for Foreign Affairs crossed the Roumanian frontier at Oradea Mare early in the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> June, and reached Bucharest that evening. He drove straight from the station to write his name at the Palace, and was entertained that evening at the banquet and reception at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on which I have already reported. Next day he was received in audience by King Carol and remained to luncheon at the Palace. In the afternoon Monsieur Barthou laid a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and then attended the meeting of the Roumanian Parliament. Immediately afterwards he delivered the address by wireless to which I have also referred in that despatch. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June he attended a large reception given by the French colony in Bucharest, which was followed by a meeting at the French Legation with representatives of the foreign and Roumanian press. Luncheon was given in his honour at the Military Club by the President of the Council. This was followed by a solemn session of the Roumanian Academy, attended by Monsieur Iorga, who announced that Monsieur Barthou had been made a “membre d’honneur” of that institution. The King himself then conducted His Excellency to visit the “Fondation Carol”, where he was made honorary member of the Royal Society of Geography and was presented with two gold medals of King Carol I and King Ferdinand and a Roumanian Bible of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He then visited the Brătianu library, which was shown to him by Madame Eliza Brătianu, the widow of its founder Monsieur Ion Brătianu. In the evening there was a large dinner at the French Legation. It was attended by King Carol, who thus made his first appearance at any foreign Legation since his assumption of the crown; and the subsequent reception, to which large numbers were invited, was honoured by His Majesty’s presence until a very late hour – somewhat to the despair of Monsieur Barthou, who murmured to me that His Majesty must have forgotten the time. As, however, I had noticed that King looking at his watch some time before he left, I concluded that he deliberately stayed so late as a compliment to his French hosts. In an interview with a number of French journalists here His Majesty has again affirmed the friendship and affection for France felt by himself and his people.

I do not propose to report the speeches which were exchanged at most of these functions, nor do I feel it necessary to describe in detail the outbursts of the press. All are variations on the same theme – the close friendship between the two countries and the agreeable prospect of unqualified French support in resisting treaty revision. The newspapers also dwell with satisfaction on the unanimity shown in the “home front”, which they trust is an augury for a greater stability in internal affairs than has been the rule in the past.

Besides the activities mentioned above, Monsieur Barthou found time to visit the widow of Monsieur Duca and to see most of the political notabilities here. He had two interviews with Monsieur Maniu, whom he decorated with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour – a distinction which was also conferred on the President of the Council and on Monsieur Vaida-Voevod. Monsieur Barthou himself received at King Carol’s hands the Grand Cordon of the Order of Faithful Service and that of Cultural Merit Class A. He also carried away with him a Roumanian passport given him by Monsieur Titulescu as a tangible proof of his acquisition of Roumanian citizenship.

The French Minister, who met his chief when he entered Roumania at Oradea Mare, accompanied him yesterday as far as Orșova. At Craiova Monsieur Barthou repeated his assurances as to France’s support. “We shall struggle together for the maintenance of the treaties and of the present frontiers, which are and remain definitive. They consecrate the end of the injustice of centuries and no one will venture to touch them. Whatever may be said elsewhere, you may be sure of the support of France in maintaining your territorial integrity”. France and Roumania are, he declared, and will remain, eternally united.

Before embarking at Orșova His Excellency sent a telegram to Monsieur Titulescu, begging him to convey to the Roumanian Government and Parliament his profound gratitude for his unforgettable reception, which had strengthened his faith in the brotherly and indissoluble friendship between the two countries.

I am sending a copy of this dispatch to His Majesty’s Minister at Budapest.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant,

Michael Palairet

TNA, fond Foreign Office 371/Roumania, vol. 18446/1934, ff. 63–70.

- 4 -

British Legation  
Bucharest, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1934

Confidential

Mr. Palairet to Sir John Simon

Sir,

I was unable to discuss Monsieur Barthou’s visit with Monsieur Titulescu until the 30<sup>th</sup> June, when he received me at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs after his return from a few days’ rest on the shores of the Black Sea.

I began by asking His Excellency for an explanation of the words which he had used when speaking to me on June 21<sup>st</sup> of the scene in the Roumanian

Parliament which had just taken place. Why had he described it as “very necessary?” Was it because of the revisionist declarations recently made by various Hungarian statesmen; or had something transpired at the meeting in Venice between Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler which had alarmed France and her allies, and had seemed to them to require an immediate answer? Monsieur Titulescu at once rejected both these suggestions. He did not mind what the Hungarians said (he has certainly never been inclined to attribute an exaggerated importance to their revisionist propaganda), and neither France nor the *Little Entente* were in any way perturbed by the Venice meeting, to which they attributed no great significance. Indeed, it seemed to them to be a meeting of two sick men. Mussolini was perhaps not in such difficulties as Hitler, but everyone knew that his financial situation was extremely precarious. He seemed anxious to make friends with France at the moment, and had urged Monsieur Barthou to come to Rome (which he would almost certainly do). Indeed, Monsieur Titulescu said, the *Duce* had told the French Ambassador in Rome that he had chosen Venice for his meeting with Herr Hitler in order to reserve for Monsieur Barthou the glories of a reception in Rome itself. France had, Monsieur Titulescu told me, now great hopes of reaching a friendly understanding with Italy. The recent article in the Fascist press, deprecating too much emphasis on revisionism, was, he thought, significant.

Monsieur Titulescu told me that the real reason for Monsieur Barthou’s excessively plain speaking was the danger to which Roumania had been so lately exposed of an entire change of foreign policy by her Sovereign. Such a possibility was regarded with dismay at Paris, and Monsieur Barthou’s visit had therefore been made the occasion of the most emphatic affirmation of Franco-Roumanian solidarity, in which King Carol had been obliged to join. He was now, His Excellency observed, absolutely committed to a policy of close agreement with France, not only by his own declarations, but also, and chiefly, as a result of the unanimous welcome given to Monsieur Barthou by all the Roumanian parties.

Monsieur Titulescu told me that even so lately as just before Monsieur Barthou’s visit His Majesty had been by no means so forthcoming. He had invited himself to dinner at the French Legation, but had at first declined to fall in with the French Minister’s suggestion that he should dine there during Monsieur Barthou’s visit, and had suggested to the Marquis d’Ormesson that the dinner should take place after the French Foreign Minister had left. Monsieur Titulescu had, however, insisted that this would be a grave affront to France; the King gave way, and he attended the dinner and reception held at the French Legation on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June, and, indeed, made a point of remaining there until very late.

Monsieur Barthou’s visit seems to have united the Roumanian parties on internal and not only on external affairs. Much excitement has been caused by a recent meeting between Monsieur Maniu and Monsieur Brătianu, the head of the Liberal party. Monsieur Titulescu tells me that the reason for this rapprochement is that they have decided to go together to the King and tell him that he must send Madame Lupescu away; but they have apparently decided not to do this until the



autumn, by which time, Monsieur Titulescu remarked, the King would have heard about it and would be prepared to counter the attack.

His Excellency told me that he hoped to arrange that King Carol should visit Paris in the autumn. Nothing had been settled, and His Majesty is, I gather, not very enthusiastic about this visit; but Monsieur Titulescu is determined that it shall take place, and I should imagine that he will probably have his way.

I enquired whether there was any prospect of a French loan as one of the results of Monsieur Barthou’s visit. Monsieur Titulescu replied in the negative, adding that there might be some arrangement made whereby France would take Roumanian petrol. Monsieur Tătărescu’s approaching visit to Paris as Minister of War (not as President of the Council) is, he told me, connected with the supply of armaments to Roumania, and he is to be accompanied by General Antonescu, the Acting Chief of the Staff; but it is announced that the Minister of Finance, Monsieur Slăvescu, will be in Paris at the same time, so that it seems likely that financial affairs will be discussed during the visit. I hear that while Monsieur Barthou was here a large number of payments to French firms were authorized by the National Bank.

In speaking of the political situation in Europe in general, Monsieur Titulescu said that France was in a strong position just now and felt sure of herself. She was sincerely anxious to reach an understanding with Germany, but she was convinced that plain speaking was a necessary preliminary to any such understanding. This had been a secondary reason for Monsieur Barthou’s dogmatic assertions at Bucharest. I may be mistaken, but I gained the impression that Monsieur Barthou had followed Monsieur Titulescu’s lead farther than he had expected. Monsieur Titulescu is naturally pleased at securing the full and public support of France, but I cannot help wondering whether he wished to find his country quite so closely bound to France as she has been as a result of the Bucharest celebrations.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant,

Michael Palairet