

REVIEW

Henryk Walczak, *Constantin Vișoianu jako poseł nadzwyczajny i minister pełnomocny Królestwa Rumunii w Polsce (1 październik 1935- 5 listopad 1936). Studium z dziejów relacji dyplomatycznych Warszawa-Bukareszt*, Wydawnictwo Chromcon, Wrocław, 2025, 123 pp.

The volume published by Henryk Walczak, one of the foremost Polish specialists in the history of Romania and of Polish–Romanian relations during the period 1918–1939, constitutes a fundamental and highly relevant study devoted to the personality and diplomatic activity of Constantin Vișoianu.

Henryk Walczak successfully addresses a significant lacuna in Romanian historiography concerning Constantin Vișoianu's diplomatic career, a figure who helped shape the profile of Romanian foreign policy in the mid-1930s and later at the end of the Second World War. A law graduate, Vișoianu became one of the most important figures in the institutional architecture established by Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu. He successively served as a member of Romania's Permanent Delegation to the League of Nations Disarmament Conference (1931–1933), Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to The Hague (1933–1935), and subsequently to Warsaw (1935–1936).

Following the arrest of Marshal Ion Antonescu on 23 August 1944 and Romania's withdrawal from the Axis and its partnership with Nazi Germany, Constantin Vișoianu played an essential role in redefining Romanian diplomacy during the brief democratic interlude at the end of the Second World War. He served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the last free governments in Bucharest: from 4 November 1944 to 6 December 1944 under Prime Minister Constantin Sănătescu, and from 6 December 1944 to 28 February 1945 under Prime Minister Nicolae Rădescu.

Having gone into exile in the United States in 1946, Constantin Vișoianu remained closely associated with King Mihai I of Romania. He was appointed President of the Romanian National Committee, a position he held from 1948 to 1975.

Henryk Walczak analysed the activity of Constantin Vișoianu in his capacity as Romania's Minister Plenipotentiary to Warsaw during the one year from October 1935 to November 1936. This interval marked the final stage of Nicolae Titulescu's tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs — which was terminated by his dismissal in the summer of 1936 — and encompassed the immediate aftermath of his replacement. The Polish historian introduces an original perspective, almost entirely unknown to the Romanian public, into scholarly circulation concerning Vișoianu's activity in Warsaw, from his

initiatives regarding bilateral relations to the contacts he established and cultivated within Polish political and diplomatic circles. Vişoianu's openly hostile attitude toward Polish foreign policy constitutes a subject that has not been addressed in Romanian historiography and therefore represents an exceptional scholarly contribution. Walczak proposes a reinterpretation of bilateral relations in the mid-1930s, bringing to light previously unpublished sources from Polish, Romanian, American archives, as well as those from the League of Nations.

The first chapter, *Okoliczności objęcia placówki w Warszawie* (pp. 15–25), reconstructs the institutional decisions through which Constantin Vişoianu was appointed, approved, and formally received as Minister Plenipotentiary at the Romanian Legation in Warsaw. The text benefits from a remarkable wealth of archival and published documentary material, which Walczak makes available to the reader to explain the protagonist's professional trajectory, the career relevance of his appointment to the Polish capital, as well as the reactions and expectations of Warsaw officials regarding his nomination.

The second chapter of the volume, *Pierwsze tygodnie w stolicy Polski* (pp. 26–36), offers a compelling reconstruction of Constantin Vişoianu's activity in the Polish capital during the first months of his tenure as head of the Romanian diplomatic mission. The analysis draws upon rich archival, primary, and published sources originating from Polish, Romanian, and other foreign collections concerning the two countries' bilateral relations. France's influence on Romanian–Polish relations, the role played by Romanian Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu, and the accumulation of both positive and negative aspects characterising the relationship between Bucharest and Warsaw constituted the principal issues addressed by Vişoianu in his discussions and initiatives with Polish officials at the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936.

The third chapter, *Pod znakiem tarć* (pp. 37–63), constitutes one of the central axes of Henryk Walczak's research findings. Drawing upon his extensive expertise in the history of interwar bilateral relations, the author meticulously traces the chronological milestones and archival material he has identified and brought into scholarly circulation, alongside representative works from both historiographical traditions. Walczak's principal merit lies in his detailed explanation of the interpretative errors that Constantin Vişoianu transmitted to and fostered among decision-makers in Bucharest concerning Poland's reservations toward the regional alliances to which Romania belonged – the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente – as well as Poland's willingness to dialogue with neighbouring states such as Hungary and Germany following Adolf Hitler's rise to power.

Part of Foreign Minister Titulescu's aversion toward his Polish counterpart, Józef Beck, was sustained and reinforced by the information and analyses sent by Vişoianu from Warsaw. Ultimately, this contributed to the consolidation of a current already discernible in Bucharest from the early 1930s

onward: the idea of Romania's gradual and organised withdrawal from its strategic partnership with Poland – a position largely embraced by Nicolae Titulescu during his tenure as head of Romanian diplomacy (1932–1936). Since these episodes of crisis have rarely been adequately explained and documented in either Romanian or Polish historiography, Henryk Walczak's study represents one of the most significant contributions to the subject.

The final chapter, *Po dymisji Titulescu* (pp. 65–70), presents and analyses Constantin Vișoianu's institutional position in Warsaw following Nicolae Titulescu's departure from the Bucharest government in the summer of 1936. The new Foreign Minister, the Liberal politician Victor Antonescu, was soon compelled to decide whether to withdraw Vișoianu from the Romanian Legation in Poland. This decision represented an attempt to remove some of the tensions that had accumulated in the bilateral relations between 1932 and 1936, tensions that culminated in Minister Vișoianu's extremely unfavourable attitude toward Warsaw. Although in his final interview granted to the Polish press, published on 29 October 1936 in *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, Vișoianu attempted to dispel the image of resentment toward Romania's strategic partner, historian Henryk Walczak remains categorical in his conclusions, asserting that these were merely "empty words" (p. 70).

A set of six appended diplomatic documents – drawn from the corpus of official speeches, official reports sent by Constantin Vișoianu to Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu, as well as from the official observations of Polish diplomats within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw – accompanies the text to support both the arguments and the analytical framework employed by the author throughout the chapters of the volume.

Henryk Walczak's work on Constantin Vișoianu's activity as Romania's minister in Warsaw between 1935 and 1936 stands as one of the most valuable historiographical contributions to the analysis of Romanian–Polish bilateral relations during the interwar period, as well as to the study of Nicolae Titulescu's activity as Foreign Minister in relation to Romania's main regional strategic partner during the first half of the 1930s.

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