

ROMANIA – FROM PEACE TREATY TO COLD WAR

ROMANIA AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE OF PARIS (1946 – 1947)

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The issues related to the new world order after the war made the topic of discussion among the leaders of the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union as early as October 1943. After the defeat of Germany on 9 May 1945, at the Conference of Potsdam, held on 17 July – 2 August 1945, treaties were signed with Italy, Bulgaria, Finland, Romania and Hungary. Based on these treaties, the Council of the Foreign Ministers of the Soviet Union, the USA, Great Britain, China and France worked out the drafts of the peace treaties with each of these states.

By the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, owing to the political climate, the collaboration of the coalition of the United Nations, such as ascertained during the war, slowly gave way to confrontation. The political leaders of Great Britain and the USA became aware of I. V. Stalin's intention to force upon the countries in its area of influence the political system of Soviet inspiration and extend the domination of the USSR towards the east, as far as possible. The first to firmly raise voice against the policy of Stalin was Winston Churchill, the political leader who had made the most sizeable concessions to the leader of the Kremlin, by acknowledging the territorial annexations made by the Soviet Union based on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939 and proposing the well-known percentage agreement (October 1944), by which Romania and Bulgaria were almost completely ceded to Russia, the same fate befalling, after negotiations, to Yugoslavia and Hungary, as well as to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Albania.

The British Prime Minister, who must have realized that he had exaggerated size of the concessions made to Stalin, noted in his speech delivered at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri (USA), on 5 March 1946, that, "*an iron curtain has fallen over the continent,*" from Stettin (Poland) to Trieste (Yugoslavia), and that, "*there is nothing that the Russians admire more than force, and nothing they respect less than military weakness,*" requesting that, "*the English speaking peoples should urgently unite in order to oppose any ambition or adventure.*"¹ The "*iron curtain*", an expression meant to enter the political vocabulary and remain in use for two decades, was being mentioned here for the first time.

¹ André Fontaine, *Istoria războiului rece*, vol. II, ed. G. Potra and Delia Răzdolescu, București, 1992, p. 27.

I. V. Stalin answered several days later, pointing out that in 1918-1919 Winston Churchill had pronounced himself for the military intervention of Great Britain against Russia and for an agreement with Germany, against communism. Stalin also accused Churchill of calumny, lack of courtesy and tact, and warned him that those who would attempt to launch “*a new campaign against Eastern Europe [...] would be crushed down exactly like 26 years before*”.²

Despite the verbal declarations made by one side and the other in the same tone, the Great Powers were able to agree on issues related to the peace treaties with the states formerly allied to Germany, and more than once took turns in imposing terms as strict as possible. The Council of Foreign Ministers eventually worked out the drafts of the peace treaties which, after having been approved by the governments in Moscow, London, Washington and Paris, were made public. The works of the Peace Conference began on 29 July 1946, at Luxembourg Palace in Paris. The mission of the Conference was to debate on the drafts of the peace treaties with Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Finland. According to the adopted procedure, the Conference could not take decisions. It only had the competence to make recommendations concerning the drafts of the Peace Treaties, which were sent for further examination by the Council of Foreign Ministers. The formerly enemy states were invited to make known their position in relation to the Peace Treaties, verbally or in written, in commissions or in the plenary meetings of the Conference. They could attend the works of the commissions or in the plenary meetings only if invited; and their point of view was to be taken in consideration only after having accepted as a proper amendment of one of the 21 delegations of the member states of the United Nations.

The draft of the peace treaty with Romania was made public simultaneously in London, Paris, Moscow and Washington on 30 July 1946. The preamble of the treaty noted the cessation of the state of war between Romania and the United Nations, although this situation had been a fact for almost three years, during which Romania had fought for 7 months alongside the United Nations for the defeat of Germany. The document noted that Romania had joined the war effort of the United Nations on 12 September 1944. No mention was being made of the fact that Romania had taken part in the war against Hungary, which would have called for reparations from the latter. Despite the blood sacrifice of the Romanian Army, Romania was not being acknowledged the quality of cobelligerent, being considered instead a state defeated by the United Nations.

The borders of Romania were the ones of 1 January 1941, with the exception of the border with Hungary. This meant that Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina remained under occupation by the Soviet Union, and Southern Dobroudja under Bulgarian occupation. The Diktat of Vienna of 30 August 1940 was annulled, the borderline of 1 January 1938 being reestablished between Romania and Hungary.

² *Ibidem*, p. 28

The Treaty was setting a delay of 90 days for the withdrawal of the Allied troops, with the exception of the Soviet troops, which would remain stationed in Romania, in order to maintain the lines of communication of the Red Army with the area of Soviet occupation in Austria.

The severe economic clauses imposed to the Romanian State included reparation, restitution and compensation. In fact, the draft of the Peace Treaty was reproducing the stipulations in the Armistice Convention of 12 September 1944, to which added reparation to the western states that were to receive all their property located on the territory of Romania "*in perfect condition.*" This implied considerable effort on the part of Romania, seeing that the related property had been destroyed, damaged or used during the war. On the other hand, Romania was obliged to waive the right to raise any claim against the Allied and Associated Powers, or against the United Nations, related to her property after 1 September 1939, located on the territories of these states. Moreover, the draft of Treaty stipulated multiple restrictions concerning the Romanian Army and its armament.

The publication of the Peace Treaty prompted the Romanian and Hungarian governments to act upon the Great Powers and the international public opinion in the issue of the border between the two states. The government of Hungary sent a memoir to the Conference of the Foreign Ministers, requesting that part of Transylvania should be attributed to Hungary, namely ca. 12,000 sq. km, including the towns of Oradea, Satu Mare and Arad. Hungary was also requesting the inclusion of clauses concerning the protection of the Hungarian minority living in Romania. The Hungarian Prime Minister Nagy Ferencz traveled to Washington, London, Moscow and Paris to defend the cause of his country, and the Hungarian Diaspora launched a huge campaign to win over the support of the international public opinion.

At the initiative of the Romanian Government, a commission presided by Ioan Christu, plenipotentiary minister, was set up in Paris. Its mission was to study the draft of the Peace Treaty, carry on talks with the representatives of the four Great Powers (the USA, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France) and of the other Allied states, and draw up memoirs illustrating the point of view of Romania. Several other commissions made of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Trade Exterior, the Ministry of Communications, the National Bank, etc., were set up in Romania, with the purpose to analyze every article, and make observations and suggestions.

On 8 August, the French Government, acting in the name of the United Nations, invited the Romanian Government to participate in the works of the Peace Conference of Paris. The following day, on 9 August, the Council of Ministers met in Bucharest, approved the position of Romania in the issues under debate at the Peace Conference, and worked out the composition of the delegation. The Romanian delegation to the Peace Conference of Paris was to militate for the annulment of the Diktat of Vienna, the recognition of the statute of cobelligerent of Romania, the annulment of the economic clauses, as well as of the restrictions to

armament and armed forces necessary in the defense of the country, etc. Although the most important issues – of territorial and economic nature – pertained to the relations with the Soviet Union, the delegation was not authorized to raise any objection that might have had a negative impact on the relations with the great eastern neighbor. The Council of Ministers ruled out that these issues would be solved in bilateral negotiations between the governments in Bucharest and Moscow. Therefore, the amendments requested by Romania were mainly targeting the relations with the western states.

The Romanian governmental delegation was headed by Gheorghe Tătărescu, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Foreign Minister, and included Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej – Minister of Communications and Public Works, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu – Minister of Justice, Ștefan Voitec – Minister of National Education, Lothar Rădăceanu – Minister of Labor, Ion Gheorghe Maurer – Sub-Secretary of State, Mihai Ralea – Romania's ambassador to Washington, Richard Franasovici – Romania's ambassador to London, Simon Stoilow – Romania's ambassador to Paris, General Dumitru Dămăceanu, Elena Văcărescu, Florica Bagdasar, Șerban Voinea, etc.

The leaders of the National Peasants' Party and of the National Liberal Party argued that the Romanian delegation was exclusively made of representatives of parties belonging to the Bloc of Democratic Parties, the government having thus failed to create a national, genuinely representative body. Despite this critical stand, one should note that the position adopted by two parties in relation to the clauses of the peace Treaty were in fact similar with that of the government; they were requesting acknowledgement of the cobelligerent statute and the annulment of the Diktat of Vienna, the marking of 24 August as the beginning of the struggle alongside the United Nations, and an amelioration of the economic and military clauses.

Romania's Declaration at the Peace Conference was made by Gheorghe Tătărescu in the plenary meeting of 13 August 1946³. On the occasion, Romania's requests and amendments were presented in a memoir. The *Declaration* expressed satisfaction for the annulment of the Diktat of Vienna of 30 August 1940 and the reestablishment of the Hungarian-Romanian border of 1 January 1938. Some additional observations were made by Gheorghe Tătărescu: Romania had entered the war alongside the United Nations on 23 August, and not on 12 September 1944, such as mentioned in the draft of the treaty. After presenting the participation of Romania in the struggle alongside the United Nations, Tătărescu was requesting that mention should be made of the fact that Romania "*led this war not only against Germany, but against Horthyst Hungary as well.*"⁴

At the request of Iuliu Maniu, President of the National Peasants' Party, a group including former diplomats and politicians, with at the head Grigore

³ *România. Viața politică în documente. 1946*, Coord. Ioan Scurtu, București, 1996, p. 320.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

Gafencu, V. V. Tilea, Constantin Vișoianu, Grigore Niculescu-Buzești, acted in Paris, in parallel with the official delegation of Romania. The group presented two memoirs (August and October 1946) expressing “*disappointment*” in the contents of the draft of the treaty, which left Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina “*under the rule*” of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Treaty was not explicit about the withdrawal of the Red Army from the Romanian territory, and therefore “*the sovereign rights of the Romanian nation will become, after the signature of the treaty, more incomplete and more uncertain than they had been during the armistice.*”⁵ Such observations, useful as they were, addressed history rather than the concrete reality, given the fact that the Great Powers had reached an understanding on the terms to be imposed to Romania. Furthermore, the group maintained that the Groza Government was not a democratic government and could not represent Romania. This unique situation – in which a second delegation would act alongside the official Romanian delegation and make hostile propaganda to the government invited at the Peace Conference – baffled the Great Powers. The latter took no notice of the actions of the Gafencu Group, being determined to negotiate exclusively with the representatives of the government in Bucharest.

The Hungarian representative, Gyöngyösi Janos, pleaded in the meeting of 14 August, among others, for attribution of a territory of ca. 22,000 sq. km of Transylvania. In the political and territorial commission, the Hungarian delegate lowered his claims to approximately 4,000 sq. km. Gheorghe Tătărescu gave an outline of the concrete situation in the respective territory, and showed that only 67,000 of the 483,000 inhabitants were Hungarians. On 7 September, after having considered the two points of view, the commission rejected the claims formulated by Hungary.

In the meeting of 23 September 1946 of the Council of Ministers, an analysis was made of the activity of the Romanian delegation to the Peace Conference. The ministers belonging to the Bloc of Democratic Parties reached the conclusion that the delegation had fulfilled its mandate with dignity and patriotism. On contrary, in separate declarations, the representatives of the National Peasants’ Party and of the National Liberal Party – Emil Hațieganu and Mihail Romniceanu – considered that the outcome gave no real reason for joy, but rather for sadness, since the targeted improvements concerning the borders had not been obtained. Reference was being made here to Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina, without the two territories being specifically mentioned, for fear of accusations of anti-Soviet attitude. The two documents were blaming the official Romanian delegation for not having obtained the cobelligence statute and decrying the burdensome reparations forced upon Romania, attributing the flaws to the “*regime of dictatorship put in use by this government.*”⁶ These were undoubtedly political declarations; since it was hardly in the power of the Romanian delegation bring essential alterations to what had already been convened upon by the Great Powers.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 380.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 337.

After the end of the Conference of Paris, the texts of the Peace Treaties with Romania, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and Finland were given a final form by the four ministers of foreign affairs at the Conference in New York of 4 November – 12 December 1946.

The officials in Bucharest sent to New York an observer, the ambassador Richard Franasovici, and a memoir entitled *Observations of the Romanian Government Concerning the Draft of the Peace Treaty with Romania*⁷, with the latest points of view of the government, namely: recognition of co belligerence, elimination of the article concerning the special protection to the Romanian citizens of Jewish origin and full compensation for the damage suffered during the war (placing them in a privileged position in relation to the other Romanian citizens who were receiving no compensation), a reduction in the compensation for damages caused to property belonging to the United Nations from 75% to one third; recuperation of debts from Germany, by the Romanian State; the organizing of an international conference to analyze the situation of the foreign military vehicles in Romania and of the Romanian military vehicles abroad, etc. After analysis, the only sensible modification accepted by the four ministers of foreign affairs was a reduction to 66,66% in compensations to the United Nations. With this, the draft of the Peace Treaty with Romania was considered completed, and it was decided that it would be signed subsequently in Paris.

On 1 February 1947, the Romanian Government took the decision to sign the Peace Treaty such as drawn up by the four ministers of foreign affairs. Gheorghe Tătărescu argued: *“The treaty, with its bright sides and dark sides, is a document that has to be accepted.”*⁸ The delegation sent to Paris for signature of the Treaty was headed by Gheorghe Tătărescu, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania. In the note of 8 February 1947, the head of the Romanian delegation noted that, *“by signing the Peace Treaty imposed by the Allied and Associated Powers, Romania commits herself, through her representatives, to make all efforts in order to fulfill the obligations deriving from the stipulations of this Treaty /.../ This sincere and loyal declaration gives right to Romania to take this last opportunity to assert once more that some of the obligations imposed to Romania are excessive, and others are unjust.”*

The peace treaties with Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Finland, and Romania were signed at the Palace of the Foreign Minister of France on 10 February 1947. The signatories on the part of Romania were Gheorghe Tătărescu, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Ștefan Voitec, and Dumitru Dămăceanu.

The Peace Treaty with Romania⁹ included several detrimental stipulations: although the Romanian army had fought along the United Nations from 24 August 1944 to 12 May 1945, and had incurred great losses (ca. 170,000 people dead,

⁷ *România. Viața politică în documente. 1947*, Coord. Ioan Scurtu, 1994, pp. 61 – 67.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 74.

⁹ “Monitorul oficial”, nr. 199, 30 august 1947.

wounded and missing in battle, a figure placing Romania fourth to the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the USA in terms of human losses), Romania was not acknowledged the statute of cobelligerent country. In September 1944, on the occasion of the discussions on the Convention of armistice, the co-belligerence of Romania had been considered by the representatives of the three Great Powers as natural, without being inscribed as such in the text of the document. The real reason lying behind this became apparent in the elaboration of the Peace Treaty. Moreover, the governments of the USA and Great Britain, although having declared that they would recognize no territorial modification occurred after 1 September 1939 (the outbreak of World War Two), changed their position and acknowledged the annexation of Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and Herța County by the Soviet Union, after the ultimatums of 26 – 27 June 1940 (referred to at Art. 1 of the treaty as the “Soviet-Romanian Agreement of 28 June 1940”).

On the other hand, the Great Powers decided to reestablish the state border of 1 January 1938 between Romania and Hungary, by which the Diktat of Vienna of 30 August 1940 was annulled. In the newly set configuration, Romania was bordering upon the Soviet Union, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria.

Along Art. 21, all the allied military forces were to be withdrawn from Romania within 90 days from the coming into effect of the treaty, “*the Soviet Union reserving the right to keep on the Romanian territory armed forces that might be necessary to it for the maintaining of communication lines between the Soviet Army and the occupation area in Austria.*” It was a complacent formula (the shortest way between the Soviet Union and Austria falling outside the territory of Romania) by which the Great Powers were agreeing on the fact that the Red Army would continue to be stationed in Romania. In September 1944, the withdrawal of the Soviet troops after the end of the war had been thought to be something natural that went without saying. However, in 1947, this issue was approached from a different point of view, with consequences in stark opposition to the spirit of 1944.

War compensations made another issue: the treaty obliged Romania to pay 300 million USD, over a period of eight years, to begin with 12 September 1944, in goods (oil products, grain, wood, maritime and fluvial ships, various equipment, and other commodities). Romania was to return all the goods seized on the territory of the United Nations, in good condition, and incur all the related expenses, in terms of labor, materials, and transportation.

According to the military terms, Romania was allowed 120,000 people in ground units, 5,000 in anti-aircraft artillery and naval units, and 8,000 in the military air force. All additional staff was to be made redundant within six months after the coming into effect of the Treaty.

The Treaty also included stipulations related to the internal policy, along which Romania was required to ensure the Human Rights and the fundamental liberties, including the liberty of speech, the liberty of press and publishing, the liberty of religion, the liberty of public opinion and political assembly; to prevent all discrimination based on religious, race, sex or language criteria; to abrogate all

discriminatory laws; to dissolve all the organizations of fascist inspiration, as well as other organizations that would make hostile propaganda against the Soviet Union or against any other member state of the United Nations; to arrest and prepare the trial of persons under the accusation of war crimes and crimes against peace or humanity, etc.

Clauses related to the international statute of Romania included the obligation to acknowledge as thoroughly valid the treaties with Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland, as well as other agreements signed by the United Nations with Austria, Germany and Japan. Romania pledged to acknowledge all the agreements signed or to be signed, for dissolving the Society of Nations. On the other hand, the Allied and Associated Powers pledged to assist Romania in her request to become a member of the United Nations Organization.

In points of international law, with the signing the Peace Treaty, the regime of armistice with the United Nations ended, and Romania was thus becoming an independent and sovereign state. Indeed, the Allied High Commission of Control had ended its existence, and the activity of the Romanian government was no longer "*monitored*" or amended by the representatives of the USA, the Soviet Union and Great Britain.

In reality, no amelioration occurred in the international statute of Romania, the country practically remaining under Soviet occupation. The representatives of the USA and Great Britain had no longer the official quality to intervene in support to the democratic forces for the respect of the citizen rights and liberties by the Romanian government. The American and British diplomatic notes would be rejected by the government in Bucharest as attempts to interfere with the internal affairs of an independent and sovereign state; the massive economic support of the USA to European countries under the Marshall Plan launched in July 1947 was rejected by the states in the area of Soviet domination, Romania included. The relations with the western states witnessed a downward trend on the backdrop of the outbreak of the cold war between the USA and its allies on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and the other states in the socialist bloc on the other hand.