

**The abrupt end of a promising start:
the romanian – finnish diplomatic relations at
the beginning of the 1920's**

*Silviu Miloiu**

*Universitatea „Valahia” din Târgoviște, Facultatea de Științe Umaniste, Str. Lt. Stancu Ion, nr. 34-36,
Târgoviște, 130105, jud. Dâmbovița, e-mail: silviumiloiu@yahoo.com

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Abstract

This article approaches on the basis of fresh archival research some of the key reasons which led to the failure of the region-building process at the western periphery of Soviet Russia (Union). This research of the relations between Romania and Finland, two distant nations located at the two extremities of Soviet western border, points out to the role played by domestic agendas, cultural and political identities, lack of knowledge of each other, regional skirmishes, and outside powers intrusions as viable explanations for the fact that the cooperation between Border States remained to some extent restricted to diplomatic and intelligence sharing cooperation. It is a paradox that although the importance of the cooperation between Border States was rapidly acknowledged by policy-makers and public opinion the achievements remained well behind the projects, ambitions and interests.

This article explores one of the reasons responsible for the failure of the Border States (meaning the new or enlarged nation-states neighbouring Soviet Russia (Union) in creating a larger space of security able to deter on the long run the Soviet ideological or political ambitions in the region and to shape a new durable stability inside the area. It starts from the premises that one of the clues for understanding this failure is the research of the bilateral or multilateral relations between the Border States. Because Romania and Finland were geographically situated at the two extremities of the area, a research on their bonds after the beginning of their diplomatic relations until the abrupt end of their direct diplomatic ties in 1922-1923 is relevant in answering to this question. The beginnings of the Finnish-Romanian relations following the Finnish independence and Romanian aggrandizement (on the start of the diplomatic ties between the two states, see Hovi 2005: 293-300) relationship look when seen against the background of the little and rather casual contacts the two nations had entertained very promising. The two countries grasped rather quickly their common interest in regard to Soviet Russia and the menace posed to their elites by Bolshevism. Accordingly, they were seriously trying to overcome their rather local international outlook and build a larger regional structure able to fulfil the task of deterring the ambitious political designs of Soviet Russia. Naturally, the creation of this structure was dependent on the goodwill and capacity of compromise of the many new small states in the area situated between the Baltic and the Black seas, a region traditionally marred by conflicts between its mixed nationalities.

One of the main difficulties impeding the creation of a large security structure in the area was the instability prevailing throughout the region. The state-building and empire-

building processes were competing to each other just as the ideologies of Liberalism, Agrarianism, Conservatism and Bolshevism. It was difficult to get an accurate picture of what was going on even next to one's own door. The new or enlarged countries in the area lacked in many cases the expertise which would have paved the way towards differentiating what was ephemeral from what was durable in the new international order. Countries appeared and vanished in a matter of weeks or months. It is therefore understandable that Romania and Finland faced difficulties not so much in deciding on their foreign policy priorities but on the strategies and tactics to be pursued in order to advance their interests. For instance, Romania followed observantly the conclusion of armistices eventually the peace negotiations between the Baltic Sea area new states and Soviet Russia. The Romanian High Command looked puzzled by the ups and downs of the negotiations between Finland and Russia that sometimes left room for hopes soon to be substituted by small-scale military actions in Karelia. Latvia was also negotiating with Soviet Russia, which was interpreted by the Romanian military authorities as a consequence of the promising example of the Estonian-Russian peace treaty of February 2, although the latter was had failed to bring about the expected economic results. In the meantime, the disputes between Lithuania and Poland encouraged Soviet Russia to propose the former state an anti-Polish cooperation, a proposal rejected by the small Baltic state (Bulletin of Information of 1.06.1920, AMR, The Cabinet of the War Minister 9/1920, 555-559). After prolonged negotiations, Finland concluded peace with Russia on October 14 by recognizing Eastern Karelia as Soviet territory on the condition that Karelian autonomy would be respected. In plus, Finland conceded the districts of Repola and Porajärvi to Soviet Russia. In exchange, Finland gained an outlet to the Arctic Ocean by the acquisition of the Petsamo district providing that it would refrain moving into the region military vessels of more than a hundred tons. Soviet Russia conceded the Karelian Isthmus to Finnish ownership, while Finland pledged in order to increase the security of Leningrad to maintain on the islands of Seiskari, Lavansaari, Great and Small Tytärsaari, Someri, Narvi Peninsula and Ruuskeri only small garrisons and no fortifications, batteries or naval ports (Mazour 1965: 68). The peace treaties concluded between the Baltic Sea area states and Soviet Russia were not welcomed in Romania. This country favoured a policy of wait and see thinking that the Soviet regime would not be given any international recognition.

Whereas the Romanian authorities were gradually taking cognizance of the success Soviet Russia had achieved in ending its isolation in the Baltic area, the Romanian High Command was also concerned with the Hungarian revisionist claims in Central Europe. New archival materials found in the files of the Romanian War Ministry exhibit the extent to which Hungary was seen in Bucharest as a factor of risk to the national security. A document handed to the cabinet of the War Minister on June 12, 1920, i.e. only eight days after the Trianon Peace Treaty was signed, expressed the worries over the big efforts being done in order to raise Hungarian Army's military preparedness: "With a special energy and a strong will the Hungarian Government is searching for national unity. On the principle of Hungarian integrity it organises a national army which aims to be tough and secure." This reformed military force was created in order to "play a considerable role in Central Europe as soon as the circumstances will turn favourable." The document accepted however the "enormous" difficulties in terms of supply with war materials the Hungarians were facing into creating the military instrument to help them achieve their ends. They sought to employ an active and intelligent propaganda exploiting both nationalism and communism in order to address this weakness (Report no. 36 of 12.06.1920 to the Cabinet of the War Minister, AMR, The Cabinet of the Minister 9/1921-1922, 635-652). This document is significant not only to the Romanian-Hungarian relations because the contention between the two parties would have some meaning in Romania's Baltic policy. Because of historical, social and foreign policy calculations Poland, Romania's ally, was showing interest in developing friendly relations

with Hungary, while Finland and Estonia could not ignore their kinship however distant to the Hungarians. As a matter of fact, the interest for Hungary and for the fate of the Hungarian minority in Romania would stay perhaps not at the top but certainly constant on the Finnish agenda. The archives of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs preserve special files with documents originating from the various associations of minorities in South-Eastern Europe. Some of them consist of petitions and complaints of the Hungarian, Hungarian-Szeckler, Ukrainian or other minorities from Romania (See, for instance, the grievances handed to the Council of the League of Nations of the Hungarian-Szeckler minority on 30.06.1922 and other documents at UA 15 Ib. 21a, other documents at UA 15 Ib 7, 8, 13).

Regardless some particular features in their geographical positions and cultural and political agendas which separated these states from each other, the vicinity of Soviet Russia practicing a policy of export of revolution served to remind them on the need to find solutions for strengthening their nations' security. Romania as well as Finland and the Baltic States were obviously aware of the dangers posed in the Reds' victory in the Russian Civil War on their states. Already by April 1921 according to Romanian military intelligence reports Soviet Russia was improving both its internal situation and its external stand. Moreover, the army was being reorganised and terror was employed to maintain order. Espionage was also very active. Romania was a direct target in this sense. A document emanating from the 4th Army Corps shows that there was "a great activity of espionage and communist propaganda carried out by very many agents and large amounts of money delivered to Romania" (The 4th Corps' informative note on the developments over the Dniester between 13.04 and 28.04.1921 to the Cabinet of the War Minister, AMR, The Cabinet of the Minister 40/1921-1922, 59). However, the Soviet intentions regarding Romania were not considered offensive as yet. The 2nd Intelligence Bureau of the 4th Army Corps appreciated in May 1921 that Soviet Russia was doing big efforts to conclude peace with Romania and even to have an economic agreement signed between the two states. In reality, even more than Romania feared Soviet Russia the Soviets feared a Romanian advance into Ukraine, a fact proven by the manifests calling the Romanian soldiers for staging a revolution if such a case would arise and by the strict surveillance of the border (2nd Intelligence Bureau of the 4th Army Corps' informative note no. 5344 of 13.05.1921, AMR, The Cabinet of the War Minister 40/1921-1922, 76-78). The Soviets have maintained this state of mind in July 1921. Thus, the 3rd Army Corps agreed that Soviet Russia was willing to urgently conclude a commercial convention with Romania in order to get access to products of first necessity (2nd Intelligence Bureau of the 4th Army Corps' note no. 5889 of 15.07.1921 to the War Ministry, AMR, The Cabinet of the Minister 40/1921-1922, 274-279) and that, as grasped from the discussions in the Romanian-Russian Commission for dealing with the issue of the Dniester bank, Moscow also wanted to conclude peace with Bucharest (2nd Intelligence Bureau of the 4th Army Corps' note no. 6005 of 28.07.1921 to the War Ministry, AMR, The Cabinet of the Minister 40/1921-1922, 383-386). Romania was not yet interested to conclude peace with Soviet Russia for as long as the Soviet regime was not recognised internationally and Moscow refused to recognise Bessarabia's unification and return the treasury of the National Bank. However, the things have changed during 1921. Romania became worried because, as an informative note of the 4th Army Corps indicates, many states situated in North-Eastern Europe had already concluded peace with Russia. This was interpreted as a consequence of the fact that they needed Russian raw materials (2nd Intelligence Bureau of the 4th Army Corps' informative note no. 6570 of 28.09.1921 on the situation of the Dniestre between 12.09-28.09.1921, AMR, The Cabinet of the War Minister 40/1921-1922, 547-555). This simplistic interpretation may conceal a Romanian sentiment of frustration for having failed to use the favourable circumstances when Soviet Russia was isolated in order to convince Moscow to recognise Bessarabia's unification

with Romania the same way it had recognised the separation of other provinces from the Russian Empire.

In spite of the fact that they had concluded or not peace treaties with Russia, the countries neighbouring Soviet Russia to the west shared similar security apprehensions regarding Soviet Russia's policies. Because of the geographical distance separating them, the case of the Finnish-Romanian conversations on finding a common basis for cooperation is very illustrative. In September 1921 the secretary-general of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs retained the Finnish envoy Väinö Tanner to a four-hour long dialogue. The main topic of discussion to which Derussi came back every time when the conversation deviated to other subjects was Russia. Acting chief of diplomacy for as long as the titular of the ministry Take Ionescu was accompanying King Ferdinand in a visit to France, Derussi expressed his deep worries about the vicinity of a communist and expansionist Russia. He pointed out to the movements of the Russian troops in the direction of Karelian Isthmus about which he had received information from the Romanian envoy Dimitrie Plesnilă. Consequently, Derussi considered that all the Border States should undertake active political measures in order to be able to meet possible Russian military expeditions. Derussi understood these measures as being preventive in their scope so that Russia would understand that a military attack carried out against a neighbouring state would be met by a strong reaction coming from many other quarters. This was deemed to have a prophylactic role by deterring the Soviet aggression. As Derussi put it very clearly, "we must, the same way as with Poland (in 1921), conclude an alliance also with Finland, in order to defend the interests of our countries on all quarters." This was a very important proposal springing from what Tanner defined in his report to Helsinki as the twinned fundamental interests this country in the east: the maintenance of the status-quo regarding the western border of Russia and the removal of the Soviet communist regime from power. The Finnish Minister underscored the complicated international status of Romania with menaces coming from various quarters, especially from the east. These were locking the country into a complicated situation, obliging it to be always on guard (Tanner's report no. 665 of 2.09.1921, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma 20, 11). Perhaps these complications of Romania's international position contributed to the fact that no concrete negotiations started between the two governments on this proposal. However, Finland seemed interested in drawing Romania into the Baltic cooperation that had been already initiated among the Baltic Sea area states.

One of the early areas of cooperation between Romania and Finland was the exchange of intelligence concerning Soviet Russia. In September 1921 the worsening relations between Finland and Soviet Russia that Derussi mentioned to Tanner resulted into an increase in the Red Army strength alongside Finnish frontier. In these circumstances, it came as a natural reaction that a meeting between the Romanian chargé d'affaires to Helsinki and the Finnish chief of General Staff General Oscar Paul Enckell took place with the purpose of exchanging military intelligence between the two countries (Plesnilă's dispatch no. 218 of 13.09.1921 to Ionescu, AMAE 71 Finland 1, 1). It is likely that this meeting ended with a gentleman's agreement between the two parties on a regular exchange of military intelligence, particularly in regard to Russia. Finland was in a difficult situation as the amassing of Soviet troops on the Finnish border continued unabated in October (Plesnilă's dispatch no. 259 of 11.10.1921 to Ionescu, AMAE 71 Finland 1, 1). An incursion of Red troops having their bases in Eastern Karelia was repelled at the beginning of February 1922 after the Bolsheviks had caused important material damages (Plesnilă's report no. 68 of March 1922, AMAE, 71 Finland 14). In the first day of 1922, Plesnilă was still concerned with the Russo-Finnish conflict on Eastern Karelia. The Romanian diplomat had exchanged views with General Eugen Alexander Högström on the Red Army's organisation, the conclusions of which were dispatched to Bucharest (Plesnilă's dispatch no. 15 of 1.01.1922 to Ionescu, AMAE 82/1890-

1945, Finland 89, 1). The Soviet issue remained a permanent preoccupation and a factor of coagulation of the Romanian-Finnish relations. In March 1922 Plesnilă sent his Foreign Ministry new intelligence about the Red Army and a study on the Ukraine (Plesnilă's dispatch no. 72 of 7.03.1922 to Duca, AMAE 82/1890-1945, Finland 89, 1).

The relations between the two parties were consolidating in other areas as well. In February 1922 the Romanian diplomat notified Bucharest on Finnish desire to conclude a convention of extradition and a convention on artistic and literary propriety with Romania (Plesnilă's dispatch no. 68 of 22.02.1922 to Duca, AMAE 82/1890-1945, Finland 89, 1). Eventually Finland also proposed the signature of a convention on industrial propriety between the two states.

Approaching the possibility of a larger alliance policy, including the Baltic States, the Romanian diplomat Plesnilă described his state's policy towards Estonia and Latvia as being a function of Romania's policy towards Russia and of the general Romanian foreign policy. Although this was not a precise definition of Bucharest being prepared to engage into active negotiations for an alliance with the Baltic nations, the Baltic Conference summoned in Helsinki was not an attempt to keep Romania away of the proceedings, this country being invited to attend it (Plesnilă's dispatch no. 238 of 27.09.1921 to Take Ionescu, AMAE 71 Finland 1). However, Romania declined to accept the invitation.

The relations between the two states assumed a symbolic meaning starting with 1922 when Tanner proposed his Foreign Ministry that the White Rose chain be bestowed upon the Romanian sovereign Ferdinand I (Tanner's dispatch no. 71 of 8.04.1922, UA 49W). The issue was brought forth for the first time in November 1921 when Tanner asked the permission to take up with the Romanian Government the topic of the exchange of decorations between the two countries (Tanner's telegram no. 152 of 20.11.1921 to Holsti, UA 49W). In January 1922 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that the second secretaries of the Romanian and French legations be awarded the White Rose, First Class, in the rank of knight. Alexis L. Isăcescu had been accredited to Finland for only nine months but his accreditation from the establishment of the Romanian Legation in Finland entitled him to an exception from the time one had to serve in Finland in order to be entitled to receive a decoration (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs letter of 4.01.1922, to the President of the Republic, UA 49W). This turned Isăcescu one of the first foreigners to be awarded a Finnish decoration. Tanner also insisted on the decoration of Plesnilă. The request was motivated partly by the diplomatic etiquette and partly for encouraging the good relations with Romania despite the new Liberal Government's lack of enthusiasm (Tanner's dispatch no. 76 of 19.04.1922, UA 49W).

Following suit the formation of the Liberal Government under the leadership of Ion I.C. Brătianu (January 1922), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was considering the possibility that its legation to Helsinki be abolished as part of a general program of reducing its expenses. On January 30 the closing down of the Romanian legations to Norway and Finland was for the first time scrutinised on budget reductions' considerations (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs note of 30.01.1922, AMAE 82/1890-1945, Finland 89, 3-4). In February 1922 the new Foreign Minister, I.G. Duca, was also looking into the expenses of the legation in Helsinki. At the beginning of his investigation it still seemed possible to maintain it on the condition that the expenses were lowered. In the end the verdict was to abolish the legation starting with April 1, 1922, a decision presented however only as a temporary measure. This was at least the message the Romanian Minister was requested to convey to Finnish Foreign Minister Rudolf Holsti. The chief of the Finnish diplomacy was pleased to learn that the decision was adopted only on a temporary basis. Meanwhile the Romanian envoy was engaged in negotiations for the convention of extradition and the convention on artistic and literary property above-mentioned, while in Bucharest negotiations were in course for a provisional commercial convention (Plesnilă's report no. 68 of March 1922, AMAE, 71 Finland 14). The

decree for the abolishing of the legations in Helsinki and Oslo was signed by King Ferdinand and I.G. Duca on March 9, 1922 to enter into force starting with April 1 (King Ferdinand's and I.G. Duca's decree no. 1178 of 9.03.1922, AMAE 82/1890-1945, Finland 89, 2). The representation of Romania's interests in Finland was assigned to the Romanian legation in Stockholm.

A reaction to the closing of the legation came with Tanner's letter to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Finnish Minister expressed his regret for the abrupt termination of the Romanian diplomatic activity in Helsinki. Tanner suggested that the legation should rather be considered temporarily suspended so as to renew its activity at a later date. Tanner had insisted upon this idea he had firstly mentioned during his interview with Duca of January 8. He also drew the attention of the Foreign Ministry's officials that with the departure of Plesnilă from Helsinki Romania will have no representation in Finland, a fact which he deemed "regrettable". Expressing the view of his government, Tanner pointed out that the Finnish executive considered the exchange of intelligence between the Russia's western neighbours valuable and the two legations as playing a fundamental role in the process. Only by maintaining the legations the two general staffs could continue a regular information exchange concerning Russia. The sharing of intelligence was but one aspect because the general staffs of the Border States needed in the Finnish diplomat's opinion to find peaceful means for preventing or meeting a Soviet aggressive action. The Finnish envoy set the relations between the two states into a larger framework insisting on the role which the Warsaw Conference of Poland, Finland and the Baltic States and the Genoa Conference could play into the cooperation of Soviet Russia's small neighbours. The Genoa Conference necessitated a permanent exchange of views so that these states supported each other in the defence of their rights. Romania watching her interests in Finland from Stockholm would deem the observation of the Finnish domestic and foreign policy evolutions and especially of the military and political developments in the Finnish-Soviet relations less accurate than from Helsinki. Expressing his prejudices against the Left, Tanner argued that the influence of the Social-Democratic Swedish government would be detrimental to a balanced appreciation of the Finnish political scene. As a consequence, the Finnish government expressed its desire that the closing down of the legation be provisory and Romania appoints a temporary diplomatic agent to Helsinki (Tanner's dispatch no. 194 of 11.03.1922 to the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, AMAE 82/1890-1945, Finland 89, 6-9).

Plesnilă appears to have been irreconcilably discontent by the closure of the Romanian Legation in Helsinki. He reacted rather offensively to this event in his dispatches of February 22 and March 7 when he informed about the firing of legation's employees (Plesnilă's dispatch no. 68 of 22.02.1922 to Duca, AMAE 82/1890-1945, Finland 89, 1). On April 30 he wrote a letter from Rome - where he had travelled to meet Take Ionescu whose health was badly damaged - to Holsti stating that on his return to Romania on April 1 he became even more conscious of the mistake that had being done. Plesnilă appreciated in this letter that any sacrifice should had been done to maintain the legation and he downrightly accused the titular of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of taking an action contrary to the national interests. Moreover, he emphasised the difficulty of watching the situation in Finland from Stockholm. In his opinion the Rapallo Treaty between Germany and Russia demanded a consolidation of the relations between the two states facing a common danger not its weakening (Plesnilă's letter of 30.04.1922 to Holsti, KA, Rudolf Holstin kirjeenvaihto KAY 5872, 353). The former Romanian envoy's opinions come out more clearly from a letter he wrote in mid-May 1922 to the Finnish diplomat Erik Gustaf Ehrström. In this dispatch, Plesnilă speaks laudatory about the action of adhering to the political line of France adopted by the Border States. His most ambitious aim seemed to have been Finland's alliance with France, Poland and the Little Entente. Plesnilă did not hesitate to encroach on Finland's domestic policy by accusing the

pro-German of criticising Holsti and Prime Minister J.H. Vennola of being jealous of the Foreign Minister (Plesnilă's letter of 14.05.1922, KA, Rudolf Holstin kokoelma 62, 112). Already in May 1922 Romania appointed a new envoy to Helsinki. Residing in Stockholm, Păclianu, who was representing his country's interests in Scandinavia, informed the Finnish Foreign Ministry on his appointment as Romania's envoy to Finland (Păclianu's letter to Vennola of 23.05.1922, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma 1).

As predicted by the Finnish Minister, Păclianu's appointment for dealing with the Finnish issues from Stockholm meant a downgrading of the relations with Finland. Păclianu visited Helsinki for the first time only in the summer of 1922 and then returned over a year later on July 19, 1923. On his first visit to Finland, the Romanian Minister discovered that his predecessor took with him at his departure the keys of the boxes and rooms of the Finnish Foreign Ministry where the papers, the cipher, the seal and the consular stamps were locked. The situation was not changed in July 1923, Păclianu lacking key elements for re-constructing Romania's diplomatic action in Helsinki. Consequently, he requested his foreign ministry to provide him with the items he needed (Păclianu's dispatch no. 196 of 11.09.1923 to Duca, AMAE 82/1890-1945, Finland 89, 13-14).

In preparation of the Genoa Conference scheduled for April 1922 the Finnish envoy to Bucharest looked for the two countries adopt a common stand during its proceedings. On February 14 Tanner reported that following an interview with I.G. Duca he became convinced that Romania followed France and would not welcome any conference with the Bolsheviks (Tanner's report no. 21 of 14.02.1922 to Vennola, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma, kansio 32). In mid-February Tanner approached both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister on this issue. Brătianu confirmed the identity of the viewpoints of the two countries while also insisting that the integrity of the treaties and borders should be left outside any discussion. However, he did not commit himself to any concrete cooperation as he also avoided giving any pledge regarding the reopening the Legation in Helsinki which he promised was to be discussed in the conjunction with the new budget. Tanner reported the importance of the Prime Minister in the general conduct of the country by stating that Brătianu's word is decisive for the country's stance (Tanner's report no. 24 of 16.02.1922 to Vennola, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma, kansio 32). However, in a dialogue he engaged two days later with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tanner received what he was looking for. Duca authorized him to report to Helsinki his Government's complete agreement with Finland Government's viewpoints regarding the identity of interests between the two states at the Genoa Conference and Romania's solidarity with Finland regarding the Russian question (Tanner's report of 18.02.1922 to Vennola, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma, kansio 32).

The Finnish position towards disarmament resembled to a remarkable degree the Romanian views. In a confidential telegram to the Finnish legations abroad (including Warsaw and Bucharest), the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed that the implementation of the idea brought forth in the Moscow Conference concerning the international total disarmament required as a precondition that preliminary steps were adopted in the direction of safeguarding the peace and security in Eastern Europe. Finland looked interested in forming a united front with states such as Estonia and Poland as far as her interests demanded it, although she looked now uninterested in being tied in her actions by the Bessarabian issue (Ciphered telegram no. 152 of 4.12.1922 to the Finnish legations in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Christiania (Oslo), Tallinn, Riga, Warsaw, Berlin, Paris, London, Bucharest and Hague, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma, Kansio 34).

In 1923 the Finnish Legation to Bucharest was also abolished. At the beginning, a memorandum of 1923 drawn for the use of Vennola stated that the funding for the legations in Bucharest and Tokio had been refused. In Bucharest the level of representation was in the first instance brought down to the level of a secretary of legation. A committee approached the

issue of the future of Finnish representation in South-Eastern Europe. The committee considered the political and economic reasons for maintaining a legation in the region and agreed on its importance. Then the committee approached the issue of the region's capital best suited to deal with Finnish interests in the Balkans. In fact, the choice the committee had to do was between Bucharest and Istanbul. Commercially, the committee noticed that the economic exchanges with Romania reached a very poor level in 1920, almost all Finnish export consisting of cigarettes paper (in value of 62,000 Finnish Marks). The committee looked at the example of Sweden and discovered that her commercial exchanges in South-Eastern Europe were biggest with Greece, then with Romania and finally with Turkey. However, the conclusion drawn from here was that Finland's commercial relations with Turkey might rise to the level of those with Romania and even more than that. Additionally, Turkey was considered as a more facile and efficient springboard for developing the commercial ties with Greece than Romania. Approaching Romania's importance to Finland, the committee found that this country's vicinity with Russia was a significant factor in preserving the diplomatic ties between the two states. However, it found that Turkey was a more important watching point in this respect. Moreover, Istanbul was considered as having greater perspectives of remaining also in the future a more focal point of international diplomacy and for big policy than Bucharest. These viewpoints convinced the committee propose that in South-Eastern Europe be maintained a legation headquartered in Istanbul and entrusted with taking care of Finland's interests in Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia as well as in Albania. The committee also proposed that the relations with Romania should be entrusted to Finland's legation in Warsaw (Memorandum no. 1143 of 20.05.1923, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma 1 (saapuneet kirjet); Paasivirta 1968: 173). This arrangement will prove long-lasting as a new legation in Bucharest will reopen only in 1939 (Paasivirta 1968: 228).

As a consequence of this decision, already at the beginning of March 1923 the Finnish envoy let Duca know that starting with April 1 the Finnish Legation in Romania would be suppressed. In mid-March Ståhlberg and Vennola wrote a letter to King Ferdinand which announced in a formal and diplomatic manner the withdrawal of the Finnish Legation from Romania. Tanner was also informed that the Legation was abolished because the Eduskunta refused its founding. In his farewell audience to King Ferdinand of April 12, Tanner expressed his sadness for leaving Romania, "a country which has already become dear to me." As Tanner informed his superiors in the Foreign Ministry the interpretation of the withdrawal of the Finnish envoy was that it was a consequence of the suppression of the Romanian mission in Helsinki. Tanner quoted some journals in this respect. While *L'Indépendance Roumaine* expressed its regret for the departure of "a knowledgeable and active diplomat, who has become a sincere friend of our country", other newspapers, especially those representing the opposition to the Liberal Government, downrightly accused Duca's foreign policy for this withdrawal. For instance, the journal of the People's Party *Îndreptarea* and the Conservative paper *Epoca* of Ionescu and Stelian Popescu clearly stated on April 12, 1923 that the measure adopted by the Finnish Government was to be reproached to Duca. *Epoca* was even more critical about the results of what it considered the short-minded policy of the Government in undermining the basis of a relationship of a very great significance to Romania. The guilty ones for the outcome of this situation were considered the Minister of Finance Vintilă Brătianu and the Foreign Minister Duca. The same opinion was shared by *Steagul* and *L'Orient* of April 11 which pointed out to the common neighbourhood of Russia as a factor motivating the relationship between the two countries and to the similarity in their situation and position vis-à-vis Russia (Vennola's telegram to Tanner of 20.03.1923, KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma, kansio 34; Tanner's report of 8.05.1923 KA, J.H. Vennolan kokoelma 20).

As Tanner and Plesnilă anticipated, the interruption of the activity of the two legations has weakened the cooperation between the two states. The conversations about a series of conventions as a first step towards a political bilateral or multilateral treaty between the two parties to address the Soviet common threat had almost ceased until the issue would be once again brought ephemerally into discussion at the end of the 1920's by the Finnish Foreign Minister Hjalmar Procopé. Even the satisfactory until 1923 exchange of military intelligence between the two parties would acknowledge a decline. At its turn, this contributed to the diminution of the chances that a general defence treaty between the Border States will ever come into existence. However, to accuse the Romanian Liberal government for allowing an opportunity of strengthening the country's security fly by closing down the legation in Helsinki will be to undervalue the importance of the Finnish flow of opinion sceptical about the practical value of an agreement with the Baltic States, Poland and Romania and more enthusiastic about the country associate herself to the Scandinavian countries. This possibility had been already understood by Take Ionescu during his term as Foreign Minister. This will be also to underestimate the reticence of the Romanian leadership in associating with the Baltic States, considered too weak and instable in order to risk a war with Soviet Russia (Union) for their sake. However, the fact that the dialogue between the two parties was made more difficult after 1922-1923 played its contribution in the failure of organising more properly the security of the area based on the cooperation between the interested parties.

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