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Concerning the history of the Romanian-Ottoman political relationship (1812-1914)

*Nicolae CIACHIR**

For their social and national emancipation struggle, the Romanians must refer to the Great European Powers, especially to the three environing empires: Ottoman, Austrian and Russian. The Habsburgs succeed to incorporate Oltenia by the peace of Passarowitz (1718), after they took Transylvania (1699) already. Oltenia returned to the Wallachia in 1739, by the peace-treaty of Belgrade,¹ thanks to the Ottoman military victories, the efforts of the French diplomacy and the Romanians insistence.

The annexionist appetite of the Habsburg came back after they enclose a part of Poland in 1772, and seize Bukowina in 1775, including the capital-fortress of Suceava and the grave of the Stephen the Great.

The empress Marie-Theresa (1740-1780) expressed her remorse given the acts of the Austrian diplomacy and she wrote to the chancellor Von Kaunitz: "How wouled we pretend to set an example to the whole world, when we speak about our reputation and our honesty for a piece of Poland or Wallachia or Moldavia?"²

Despite these words, until 1918 Bukowina, an oldest Romanian province, will be under the Vienna jurisdiction and it had to suffer hard and permanent national pressures.

In a well-informed work, "*Istoria Rumânii*" (Petersburg, 1905), the Russian historian N. Boretzkii-Bergfeldt ask himself about what purpose had the Romanians for the XVIII century wars between Russian, Austria and Ottoman Empire. The same author says that these wars have some positive results because they undermined the Ottoman domination results because they undermined the Ottoman domination in the Romanian Principalities and they also impelled their emancipation struggle.

In fact, the Romanians are very disappointed by the Habsburgs policy and they turn to Petersburg. But their hopes are violently struck by the peace-treaty of Bucharest (1812), when the Romanians are lost a Moldavia's district.³

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Furthermore, the same Russian historians point that it was quite necessary an understanding between Ottomans and Romanians in the new political context, because the firsts are fighting for the territorial integrity of their Empire and in subsidiary they are in the Wallachia and Moldavia's service. The Romanians are forced to adopt these position because they can keep the national existence only in these way, despite that the surrounding Christian Empires wanted their dissolution.⁴

Of course, the situation must not be considered in a common way. After 1812 the Romanian-Ottoman relationship hadn't became idyllic and the position of the two Christian Empires was permanently suspected. Romanians can't forgot that the Ottomans Empire still are sovereign power and for the centuries the Ottomans extorted the country's wealth through the tribute and other many obligations.

Also, the Romanians can't forgot that some Romanian district are still incorporated to the Ottoman Empire (Dobrodja, for example). Furthermore, some important fortresses (like Giurgiu, Turnu, Braila) are Turkish *raia* and because they are on the left of Danube they paralysed the economic and strategical development of the Romanian Principalities.

In these conditions, the young Romanian diplomacy was actually forced to embrace lord Palmerston's principal: England has not enemies, not truthful friends, only permanent interests.⁵ In 1821 Tudor Vladimirescu are entirely inferred all these. He rises in arms for setting-up a new internal social order and a large autonomy, without break-down the Sublime Porte sovereignty.⁶ Tudor want to solve peaceful the country requests, all the more as he had the Serbian example. Serbia didn't succeed to became independent despite the Russian help and the war of 1806-1812, in which the Romanian pandour chief was personal evolved.⁷

Otherwise than Karageorge, prince Miloš Obrenovici takes a different tactic. He convinced the Ottomans to accept the dialogue and finally to give Serbia the autonomy.⁸ And also, the Russian archive documents and the latest conclusions of the Soviet historiography certify that neither Ipsilanti nor Vladimirescu are received assurance that their actions will be follow by the entrance of the Russian troupes in the Romanian Principalities or the unleasher of a war against the Ottoman Empire.⁹

Russian Protectorate of the Romanian Principalities, Serbia and Greece are official established by the peace-treaty of Adrianopole (1829). In 1833 by an other treaty at Unkiar-Iskelessi the Russian took the whole Danube Delta, while the Ottoman Empire are actually subordinated by the Northern monarchy. These facts aroused a deeply anxiety to the European powers as to concern the future of the South-East Europe and the future existence of Turkey.

It is not an incident that in 1834 it was setting up the Quadruple Alliance (England, France, Spain, and Portugal), which must to counteract the advancement of Russia and Austria to the Straits and Istanbul. The British diplomacy would need many years to obtain the conclusion of the London's Convention (1841) by which the Ottoman Empire had been put under the Great Powers guarantee (England, Russia, Austria, France, Prussia). This states provide for the inviolability of the territories that Ottomans keep under a directly or indirectly control.

The French historian Jacques Droz noticed that Palmerston's victory was remarkable, even he used no courtesy and rude means. In this way he was one of the politicians who promote England like an world power.¹⁰

Britons carried on an interested policy. The economical treaty (1838) stipulate that the British goods can pervade to great advantages the territories dependent on the Ottomans, inclusive the Romanian Principalities.

The Ottomans give proof of consciousness and recognize Ion Ghica like a Romanian ambassador (early May 17, 1848) and the Princely Lieutenancy impose by the Revolution of 1848 like the legitimate government of Wallachia. This fact induces in the next days a similar recognition by England, Prussia and Greece.¹¹ Finally, the sovereign and the protector Powers would put down with troops the Romanian revolution.

In June 1853 Tsar Nicolae I command to his troupes the military occupation of Romanian Principalities for oblige Turkey to satisfies some Russian claims. It is the pretext of the Crimea War (1853-1856) solved with the Russian defeat. Ottomans would be military help by England, France and Piemont, while Austrian and German Confederation States have also an anteRussian standpoint.

The peace-treaty of Paris (1856) put the Romanian Principalities under the trusteeship of the Great Powers (that term is unsuitable for Prussia and Piemont, but it is in usage). Actually, the common trusteeship made impossible an unilateral intervention against the territorial integrity of the Romanian states, but some transactions are happening anyway. For example, the Emperor Napoleon III proposed to the Hasburgs the annexation of the Moldo-Wallachia instead of giving up Lombardie of Italy, which was ruled by the Savoia dynasty.

Although that the Ottoman Empire opposed to the Romanian Principalities Union and despite the Convention of Paris (1858) stipulations, Turkey accepted the British suggestion and recognized Alexandru Ioan Cuza like Hospodar of the both Principalities. Also, Cuza would be receive with all the honors at Istanbul. In 1866 when Prince Carol I put up on the Romanian throne the Ottomans wouldn't do a military

interference, even they are protested and called up the troupes at the Great Powers suggestion.

For all that the Ottomans refused to recognize by negotiations the Romania Independence. On that account Romania proclaimed by herself the thorough State Independence on May 9, 1877, and right after that she would gain this independence on the South Danube battle fields. In this war Romania had like allies Russia, Serbia and Montenegro. She was confronted with some Ottoman topnotch troupes conducted by the brave and gifted general Osman Pasha.¹²

The independent Romania open a new stage in the Romanian-Ottoman relationship because the both of them are now equal and territorial unassuming States.¹³ On May 9, 1877, the brilliant statesman Mihail Kogalniceanu have took a speech and he seems to have a vision: "We want to have good relations with all the peoples ... even with Turkey; with Turkey we shall have new contacts, because we don't want to keep the present-day contacts, which doesn't have more reasons to be".¹⁴

On February 9, 1878, Kogalniceanu proposed to repatriate a 6000 ottomans war-prisons "which on our behalf are free to returns theirs homes".¹⁵ On his turn the Ottoman Empire recognized the Romanian Independence before England, Italy, France or Germany.

In September 1878 according to the new situation Romania and Turkey made diplomatic changes. The first extraordinary and plenipotentiary Romanian ambassador was Dimitrie Bratianu. At the Romanian legation of Istanbul was connected the General consulates of Salonik, Smirne, Adane and furthermore those of Monastir and Janina. At the Ottoman Legation of Bucharest depended also some consulted, made in this order: Iassy (1879), Calarasi (1880), Tulcea (1880), Constantza (1882), Giurgiu (1891), Turnu Severin (1892), Braila (1895), Galatzi (1897).¹⁶

As a result of a tolerant and understanding policy carried on by the Romanian government concern to all nationalities, from 1880 some of the Muslim refugees started to come back to Dobrodja.¹⁷

By this time the Sultan gave a dinner to honor Dimitrie Bratianu and he made on this occasion the follow statement: "From Turkey and Romania is an imperious necessity to have the most friendly relationship".¹⁸ During the Peace Conference of Bucharest (1886) with a view to settling the Serbian-Bulgarian conflict, George Ghica are transmitted from Pera "the expression of the Turkish government feelings given the accurate attitude of the Romanian government".¹⁹

In 1891 the Sultan extolled the Romanian nation and seemed favorable to the encreasment of the Romanian territory. He stated that the both states "have identical interests, common dangers an for this reason is necessary an Antante between Romania and Turkey".²⁰ The Sultan was

refereed to those districts which hadn't been part of Romania, despite that are inhabited in majority by Romanians, especially Transylvania.²¹

In 1897 when Ottoman Empire and Greece are at war, Serbia and Bulgaria called up troupes to their borders, Turkey insisted to conclude a defensive treaty with Romania for maintaining in the Balkans the Berlin's Treaty status-quo-ante.²²

In May 1905, the Turkish government edited an *iradea* which recognized and allowed the setting-up of the Macedo-Romanians communities inside the Ottoman territories.²³ It is almost knew the tolerant attitude of the Ottoman government given to the Balkan Wallachians in the whole Middle Age, wherever they are: in Macedonia, Pindus Mountains, Tessalia, Dalmatian Coast or Albania. A.D. Xenopol said about the significance of Wallachians in the South-East European history: "these *armatolies* or captains have all a Romanian descents; just after their first entrance in Europe, Turks found them hang up by the tops of the mountains; their villages and market towns looks more to be hung on the sky than lay down on the earth; their places still are in some lands which seems to be impossible to trample by human foot. All these *armatolies* kept in their ravines an almost full independence by the Turkish power".²⁴

Sish Vladimir, a Czech historian and ethnograph, registered the follow incident happen in some Macedo-Romanian village in Macedonia, near Kicevo. When the soldiers came with the Ottoman government order regards the passing on the Muslim religion, the villagers are asked and received an allowance for some months until they would finish all the pork.²⁵

In the First Balkan War (1912), the Turks would special ask a Romanian detachment when the Ottoman capital was threatened and international troupes are landed for Istanbul security assurance. With this occasion would land the Romanian sailors under the leadership of Captain-Commander Negru and their official trip was doing with the cruiser "Elisabeth".²⁶

In the Second Balkan War (1913) Romania and Ottoman Empire would be side-by-side, the Sultan stated that he wanted "the most cordial relationship with Romania". Moreover he appealed our country to intermeddle an islands exchange between Turkey and Greece.²⁷

Afterwards the brilliant Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu refereed to the Balkan Antante, in this Romania and Turkey were partners. Titulescu are marvelously synthesized some of our common past: "If my country granted a boundless confidence in Turkey loyalty, this is only the fulfillment of the Prince Stephan the Great's will. In the XVIth century he said on his death-bed: "If you ever should be forced to agree with some of your enemies, choose the Turks, because they are the most honestly".

The author of the present essay tried only to punctuate some of the political past moments of the two peoples. In 1878-1914 the relationship was good, even cordial and some misunderstanding would be goodwill solve by the both partners.

Numerous Romanian politicians expressed themselves about the Young Turks bourgeois revolution in 1908, indicate that Romanian State hailed the Ottoman Empire regeneration movement.²⁸

In the same time the Turkish news-paper "İkdam" highlighted the freedoms of the Muslims living in Romania: there are two muftii* payed by the government, two religious law courts, more than 300 mosques, 107 hogi, 100 iamami* in the both Dobrodjean districts (Tulcea and Constantza); a Muslim seminar (medress) was founded to Babadag and moved after a while to Medjidia; the Muslims who are doing the military service under the Romanian colors could wore Turkish cap; there are some active Muslim officers in the Romanian army; general Alexandru Averescu, the War Minister, wont to make up a special company including the Muslims from the Bucharest's Horsemans Regiment.²⁹

A Romanian diplomat informed the government that those kind of news read in the most popular Turkish journal could induced a good impression in the Ottoman political circles.³⁰

The two states made also an active trade between them: Romania exported cornflower, barley, various kind of cheese, timber, distilable spirits, vegetables, sheep, shegoats, wines, hides, crude oil, gas, butter, tapestry furniture³¹ and imported from Turkey: edible oil, tobacco, lemons, oranges, cotton, khalva, fishes, fresh vegetables.³²

Notes:

1. *Acte si documente privind istoria renasterii României*, I, p. 48-58, (the peace-treaty had 23 articles and it was drew up in the Latin language. The article no. 4 stipulated the return of Oltenia (Austrian Wallachia), including the mountains, the Perishani fortress of Lovishtea, the island and fortress of Orshova);
2. For the Austrian politics in the XVIIIth century see also Erich Zollner, *Histoire de l'Autriche des origines à nos jours*, Paris, 1966, p. 291 and next; see also Gaston Zeller, *Les tempes modernes*, II, *De Louis XIV à 1789. Histoire des relations internationales*, publiée sous la direction de Pierre Renouvin, Paris, 1955, p. 198 and next;
3. N. Boretzchi-Bergfeld, *Istoria Rumânii*, Petersburg, 1909, p. 179-180;
4. *Ibidem*, p. 179-180;

5. Lord Palmerston, *Sa correspondance intime pour servir à l'histoire diplomatique de l'Europe de 1830 à 1865*, Première partie 1820-1849, Paris, 1878, p. 113;
6. Gh. Iscru, *1821-moment crucial in istoria moderna a României*, Bucuresti, 1981, p. 22;
7. N. Ciachir, *Istoria moderna a Serbiei*, Bucuresti, 1974, p. 25;
8. *Ibidem*, p. 34-35;
9. Documentî Rossiskoso Ministerestva inostranîh del Vensniaia politika Rossii XIX, i naceala XX veka, tom XI, Moscova, 1979;
10. J. Droz, *Histoire diplomatique de 1648 à 1919*, Paris, 1972, p. 313;
11. Anul 1848 in Principatele Române, vol. III, Bucuresti, 1932, p. 274;
12. N. Ciachir, *Razboiul pentru independenta României in contextul european (1875-1878)*, Bucuresti, 1977, p. 202-211; vezi si Emekli Halil Sedes, *1875-1878 Osmanli Ordusu Savaslari. 1877-1878. Osmanli Rus ve Rumen Savasi*, Istambul, 1935;
13. See for details N. Ciachir, *Contributii la istoricul relatiilor româno-turce (1878-1914)*, in Buletin de Studii si Referate A.D.I.R.I., no. 5, 1970, 36 p.;
14. Documente privind razboiul de independenta, vol. II, Bucuresti, 1955, p. 668;
15. N. Iorga, *Correspondance diplomatique*, doc. 675, p. 459;
16. Arh. MAE, fond 21, dos. 21, Repr. literale K-2, S, E-2, O-2, S-14;
17. Arh. MAE, fond 21, vol. 33, f. 20;
18. Arh. Ist. Centr., Arh. St. Buc., fond Casa Regala, dos. 25 (1880), f.1;
19. Arh. MAE, fond 21, dos. 41, the codificat telegram from February 4, 1886; see also N. Ciachir, *La conclusion de la paix de Bucarest*, in "Revue des études sud-est européennes" nr. 3-4 (1965); see also, N. Ciachir, *Orasul Bucuresti – locul tratativelor conflictului balcanic din 1885-1886*, in "Materiale de istorie si muzeografie", nr. 7, Bucuresti, 1969;
20. Arh. St. Buc., fond Casa Regala, dos. 19 (1891), f. 1;
21. This ancient Romanian district are returned to Romania by the whole people will (see for details M. Musat, *Infaptuirea maselor populare din România din anul 1918 în confirmarea lor pe plan international*, in "Anale de istorie", no. 2, 1976, p. 60 and next; see also Mircea Musat, Ion Ardeleanu, *Viata politica in România (1918-1921)*, Bucuresti, 1976);
22. Romania avoided to conclude such a treaty with the Ottomans just because she doesn't want to prejudice the Balkans states struggle and them interests to recover some territories. In spite of all this, a Bulgarian historian made these unwarranted affirmation: an offensive or defensive Romanian-Ottoman treaty have been a Romanian idea. Like a French

- diplomat accredited in Sofia have been said the Romain purpose could be a South territorial extension and to get new privileges for the Macedo-Romanians (Veska Nikolovna, *La Bulgarie et les pays voisins pendant la guerre greco-turque (1897)*, in "Revue bulgare d'Histoire", no. 4, 1981, p. 35-37);
- 23.Arh. MAE, fond 21, vol. 47, f. 97;
- 24.A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiana*, vol. IX, p. 38-39;
- 25.Die Mazedonien, Zurich, 1918, p. 384;
- 26.Arh. MAE, fond 21, vol. 67, f.151;
- 27.N. Ciachir, *Rolj gosndarstv iugovostoka Evropi v mejdunnarodnih otnoseniah (1908-1913)*, in "Nouvelle études d'histoire", vol. IV, p. 21, Bucarest, 1980, p. 281-283;
- 28.N. Ciachir, *Implicatiile pe plan european ale revolutiei turce din 1908*, in "Revista de istorie", nr. 9 (1978);
- * "iman", "hoge", muftiu" – different kinds of Muslim priests
- 29.Arh. MAE, fond 21, vol. 55, f. 248-252 (there are the pages of the newspaper "Ikdam", includ the translation);
- 30.*Ibidem*, f. 237;
- 31.Arh. MAE, ... T. 6, vol. I (numberless);
- 32.*Ibidem*.