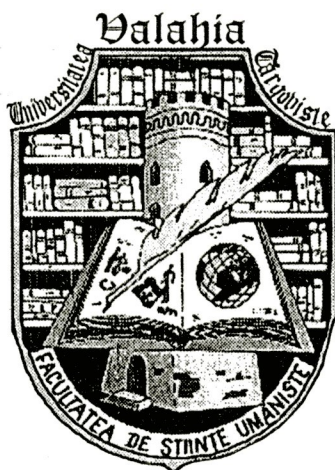


Le Ministère d'Education et de la Recherche  
L'Université „Valahia“ Târgoviște  
Faculté de Sciences Humaines

# ANNALES

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## THE WINTER WAR: ROMANIAN PERCEPTIONS, 1939-1940

*Silviu Miloiu* \*

This work concentrates mainly on the perceptions of the Romanian diplomats and press of a meaningful moment in the history of Finland, of the Finnish – Soviet Union relationship and, broadly speaking, of the relationship between the so-called "border states" and the Bolshevik empire.

The border states manifested during the inter-war period a certain degree of mutual security concerns understanding and, even sometimes, co-operation for the sake of strengthening up their own and the others safety. Despite some achievements, they were not yet able to find the adequate keys for building up out of this area a secure region in the international relations. Thus, once the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact has been signed, these countries tried to avoid only for themselves being drawn into a conflict either with Germany or the Soviet Union. They didn't care about the others security as such anymore.

Romania and Finland, whose importance and status among the border states was the most important except Poland, co-operated during the inter war period, especially in the field of military intelligence exchange. In 1921, the Finnish minister in Bucharest, Väinö Tanner and the Romanian Foreign minister, Take Ionescu, agreed on sharing intelligence with regard to Soviet Russia, according to the documents preserved in both Romanian and Finnish archives.

The diplomatic reports of the Romanian and Finnish diplomats in one's other capital demonstrate that sharing military intelligence concerning Russia was followed during the Väinö Tanner's mission in Bucharest and mostly abandoned after he left Romania. Military intelligence sharing continued however in Warsaw between the military attaches of the two countries, according to the Finnish War Archive documents. By the end of the 30's the need for an institutional framework for sharing intelligence has again been felt by the two parts. Thus the Romanian Legacy in Helsinki informed Bucharest on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1939 about the willingness of the Finnish military of better direct links with their Romanian counterpart. The reasons behind this request were connected with a new geo-political situation developing in the area: Russia was recovering herself and the both little states had a long and facile border with Soviet Union. Important Soviet garrisons were placed by the frontier with both Romania and Finland. Observing the movements of the Soviet troops was a mutual interest of Romania and Finland. In fact, military intelligence sharing already existed in-between Finland and Poland. Romania and Poland as well, in accordance with their 1921 alliance treaty, were sharing intelligence among themselves. Therefore, a strengthening in the Romanian-Finnish relationship would only mean that the last curve of the circle has been drawn. In making his plea better understood in Bucharest, the Romanian diplomat in Helsinki, Berea, underscored the value of the information concerning Soviet Union possessed by the Finns: "Now when for Finland arises a series of issues strikingly similar with the ones concerning Romania, with all their repercussions on the military field, such a contact cannot be but useful". About the procedure of making this contact workable, the Romanian diplomat proposed as a

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questionnaire with the most important issues for one of the partners be sent to the other for an answer to be given in two weeks. The co-operation was re-activated (dossier 14, 96-97, report no. 375, 17 May 1939, Berea to Bucharest). Unfortunately, it was too late to be able to change anything in the economy of the Second World War.

We are not going to repeat the history of the Winter War as it had been read in Romania. We wish however to look to the picture cutting four main images of interest for my research: how far the co-operations of the two parts went during the war, how accurate the intelligence gathered by the Romanian side (diplomacy and press) was by comparing it with other sources (Finnish archives records – Archive of the Finnish Foreign Affairs, Finnish Military Archive, British – “British Documents of Foreign Affairs” and American diplomatic Papers – “Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers”, the monographies and various books dedicated to the war – Arnold&Veronica Toynbee, Pentti Virrankoski, Max Jakobson’s works). Two other questions to be given an answer in this work are connected with the perceptions of the Romanian society about the war and the way this war influenced the Romanian foreign policy and its international status.

### **1.a. The Romanian diplomacy and the Winter War**

The first Romanian diplomatic report to record the Soviet new level of diplomatic pressure put on Finland dates back to September 25<sup>th</sup> 1939. The Romanian minister in Helsinki, George Lecca, whose reports would be the main target in this study, remarked in this report the concern of the Finnish policy-makers with the weakness in her relationship with the Soviet Union proved by Germany (dossier 3, 6, telegram no. 821, 25 September 1939, Lecca to Bucharest), one of the main powers to support Finland acquiring an independent status by the end of the First World War. Two days later, Lecca noticed the political concern with the Soviet requests for two islands situated in front of Kronstadt being surrendered to Moscow. Having them in their hands, the Soviets could easily dominate all the Eastern shores of the Baltic Sea (dossier 3, 8, telegram no. 833, 27 September 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

The mutual assistance treaty with Estonia concluded on 28 September by the Soviet Union, created even more concern within Finland. Helsinki could not count on a German support anymore. Therefore, she had to change the main lines of her policy toward Soviet Union, transmitted Lecca to Bucharest. The first practical Soviets demands from Finland were analysed by the Romanian diplomats based in Helsinki on October 8<sup>th</sup>. The Soviets asked a Finnish delegate be sent to Moscow in order to discuss the so-called “pending issues” existing between the two countries. According to the intelligence gathered by the Romanian Legacy, Moscow was aiming to get control over the islands situated just in front of Kronstadt, and over a naval base located into one of the Finland’s harbours. Despite the fact that Finland was ready to make some concessions to meet part of the Soviet demands, the Finnish troops were sent by the frontier with the Soviets in order to be able to defend the countries’ boundaries (dossier 3, 9, telegram no. 874, 8 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

The Finnish policy with regard to the Soviet claims had already been defined when the report of 9 October of the Romanian Legacy based in Helsinki informed Bucharest that the Finnish envoy in Stockholm had been granted the right to discuss the Soviet requests but not to decide upon them. If the Moscow’s pretensions tended to be over-exaggerated, the Finnish delegates would not even discuss them. The main idea was Finland not to make any territorial concession without being granted a compensation. In the



Ministry of Foreign Affairs the dominant idea was that the Soviet Union would put to bear great pressure on Finland, without anyway going to a war in order to enforce their claims (dossier 3, 12, telegram no. 877, 9 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). Thus, as George Lecca insisted, "the Finnish prestige must come out intact" from Moscow's negotiations.

The fact that Sweden was sending weapons and ammunition to Finland, as well as the American diplomatic intercession in Moscow were strengthening the Finnish determination to resist as much as possible (dossier 3, 14, 12 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). The sympathy for the America grew up, while the respect for the Germans who refused to support Finland declined (dossier 3, 15, telegram no. 905, 8 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, the Romanian diplomats in Helsinki transmitted to Bucharest fresh news about the Soviet-Finnish negotiations. The report observed that, at the official level, it was followed a line of discretion with regard to the Soviet claims in the negotiations. Out of private sources, Lecca learned that Moscow had demanded the cession of certain strips of territory and islands in front of Leningrad. Added to these, the Soviets also demanded Petsamo, a right of control over Ahvenanmaa, and a pact of mutual aid on the Baltic pattern to be signed by the two sides. Lecca concluded that "it is out of question that Finland will refuse and totally reject this last claim as being totally opposed to both her policy pursuit up to now and Finnish national interest" (dossier 3, pp.17-18, telegram no. 913, 19 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

In two days, the Romanian Foreign Ministry got new information concerning the Finnish-Soviet relationship from its envoy in Helsinki. In this report, the departure of Väinö Tanner, the celebrated leader of the Social-Democrat Party to Moscow, in order the Finnish delegation to have represented all the main political trends in the country, was especially paid attention to (dossier 3, p. 21, 21 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

By the end of October, the Romanian diplomats were already noticing the worsening of the Soviet-Finnish relationship. The Finnish government was preparing the public opinion for resistance. The Parliament discussed in a secret seance the hard territorial and political Soviet claims. Only a great power, England, was advising Finland to resist the Soviet demands, but only in order to achieve her own political ends (dossier 3, p. 23, telegram no. 951, 30 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

In the meantime, the new departure of the Finnish delegation for Moscow opened the way for hopes. The instructions of the delegation were more appropriate in order to reach an understanding with the Soviet Union, the Romanian minister in Helsinki believed. The Finnish government was ready to give up to Soviet Union the small islands from the Gulf of Finland if it were to be granted a right compensation in Karelia. The written Finnish proposals gave the Soviets a total control over the Gulf of Finland. On the other hand, the Romanian diplomat predicted that the Soviets would diminish their pretensions. In his report, the Romanian diplomat analysed the three possible outcomes of the Moscow negotiations:

- reaching an agreement;
- a temporary suspension;
- going to war, an option which was unlikely according to the Finnish Foreign Ministry.

Out of his own investigations, the Romanian diplomat believed that "the Finnish government is determined to make the necessary concessions compatible with the



countries' sovereignty and security in order to avoid a war, but there's no way to exceed certain limits" (dossier 3, pp. 23-24, report no. 951, 30 October 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

Molotov's speech of the end of October and the disclosure of the main points of the negotiations was interpreted by Lecca as revealing the maximum of the concessions the Soviets were willing to do: "Facing the risk of a major conflict with her big neighbour, Finland was ready to make painful sacrifices, except granting a naval base on the Finnish territory. This would have endangered her sovereignty and repudiate her policy of neutrality (dossier 3, pp. 29-30, telegram no. 909, 1 November 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Romanian Legacy in Helsinki noticed the impasse of the negotiations since the two parts seemed to have made the maximum of concessions without reaching an agreement. The naval base issue was in "the core of the dispute", according to the Finnish foreign minister (dossier 3, p. 33, telegram no. 983, 11 November 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

By the middle of November the Romanian minister transmitted to Bucharest the new developments in the Finnish-Russian dialogue. The Finnish government decided its policy with regard to the Russian pretensions. This policy was a strong resistance. In this way, the government appeared as an intransigent defender of the countries' integrity and neutrality. The Parliament, the public opinion, the press and the military were totally behind the government, supporting its policy. There was a belief that the Soviets would attack Finland, but there was no other option than resistance. In this scope, Finland received artillery and anti-aircraft cannons from Sweden, planes from Germany, weapons from Hungary (dossier 3, p. 34, telegram no. 991, 14 November 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). It was not totally out of question even a Soviet ultimatum since the Soviets could not accept the stage of stalemate in which such a small country attracted Soviet Union (dossier 3, p. 35-36, telegram no. 993, 15 November 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

The 26 November 1939 border incident was correctly understood by the Romanian Legacy in Helsinki. The willingness of Finland to eliminate any doubt that Soviet allegations were false was underlined by Lecca in his reports. The Soviets, Lecca wrote to Bucharest, were looking for a pretext for denouncing the 1932 non-aggression pact with Finland, or to have the negotiations started over (dossier 3, p. 38, telegram no. 1026, 28 November 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

On 30 November 1939 the Romanian minister informed Bucharest about the denouncing of the non-aggression pact. The Soviets attacked Finland without a formal declaration of war, and the Red Fleet bombed Viborg (dossier 3, p. 40, telegram no. 1036, 30 November 1939, 14<sup>05</sup>, Lecca to Bucharest). The Finnish government was yet still willing to continue the negotiations (dossier 3, p. 41, telegram no. 1034, 30 November 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). Helsinki was also hit by bombs (dossier 3, p. 42, telegram no. 1043, 30 November 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). The situation was confusing and there were many different rumours in which the Romanian diplomats tried to see the true picture of the situation.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, the enlargement of the political base of the government was commented in a report sent to Bucharest as an attempt to win the Moscow's accept for further negotiations. Yet, the Soviets were determined to give a radical solution to the Finnish question, integrating this country into the Soviet system. The founding and the very existence of the Terijoki government was a demonstration of this fact, concluded Lecca (dossier 3, pp. 43-44, telegram no. 1049, 2 December 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). Thus, the Moscow's refusal of a Swedish mediation was logical (dossier 3, p. 45, telegram no.



1050, 3 December 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). They were ready to "negotiate" only with Kuusinen (dossier 3, pp. 46, telegram no. 1055, 5 December 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, the Romanian Legacy in Helsinki was still gathering intelligence about the Finnish initiatives to re-open the negotiations. The Romanian minister information were in the sense that Helsinki was ready to accept even harder conditions than the Soviets previously requested, in order to stop the war. Therefore, the initiative of the Social-Democrat Party to use its influence for re-opening the gate for dialogue with Moscow lead to nothing. The Social-Democrats had been ready to accept all the Soviet claims plus a military alliance and a common economic policy. The Soviet tough, intractable attitude made the Finnish government position if not easier then clearer. The only remaining option was to continue the resistance to the end (dossier 3, pp. 48-49, telegram no. 1056, 8 December 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

In its analyses concerning the developments in the Soviet-Finnish war, the Romanian Legacy pointed out to the numerical and technological disproportion between the two armies. Yet, the Romanian diplomats observed the poor line of communication of the Soviet army nearby its frontier with Finland. Moreover, the mood within the Bolshevik troops was poor. All the military attaches acknowledged the superiority of the Finnish soldier. They were predicting that Finland, helped by the General Winter and rocky terrain would be able to resist 2-3 months, despite the numerical disproportion. The Soviets were able to advance only following the roads. The Finnish, hidden in the forests as they were, answered with a guerrilla-kind warfare. Unfortunately for this small brave country, Finland could not expect any direct support from any power on the earth. The end of the war was accordingly clear for everyone. The only hope was Russia to engage itself in another conflict in some other part of Europe (dossier 3, pp. 54-56, telegram no. 1080, 19 December 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

The German hostile attitude toward Finland was also remarked by the Romanian Legacy in several reports (dossier 3, p. 58, telegram no. 1092, 25 December 1939, or p. 59, telegram 1096, 29 December 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). Germany refused a mediation asked for by Helsinki, put pressure on the Scandinavian states to end any support for Finland, and offered the Soviets to help them make the Finnish coast blockade more effective. Yet there were also favourable steps Germany made toward Finland too. For instance, the extension of the commercial treaty terms with Finland. According to the Romanian Legacy interpretation, this fact demonstrated the two main trends existing within Germany with regard to the war: one of them inauspicious, the other favourable to Finland (dossier 3, p. 63, telegram no. 9, 6 January 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

At the beginning of January, the Romanian diplomacy noticed the difficulties in the Finnish situation. The British-French initiative to support Finland, and the Allied military mission sent to Helsinki rather complicated the Finnish story (dossier 3, p. 62, telegram no. 10, 6 January 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). A possible Allied support could have received an answer from Germany. Thus, the Finns tried to have more military successes in order to enter into negotiation with Moscow (dossier 3, p. 65, telegram no. 19, 13 January 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). Although an Allied military support would have prolonged the Finnish resistance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not yet aiming to such a development. Behind this attitude, according to the Romanian minister in Helsinki, Lecca, was the fear that Finland would become European field of battle. Therefore, the Finnish were still looking for an agreement with Soviet Union (dossier 3, pp. 67-69, telegram no. 74, 8 February 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). Although, in this report, Lecca showed himself



rather pessimist in such a possibility to get happened, two days later he informed Bucharest from a trustful source in Stockholm that the Finnish-Russian dialogue was reopened (dossier 3, p. 70, telegram no. 90, 10 February 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). On 21<sup>st</sup> February, Lecca transmitted to Bucharest a new report with regard to the Soviet-Finnish negotiations. He underlined the justification of the rumours concerning the existence of certain Soviet conditions to end the war. According to Lecca's information, the conditions were revealed to the Finnish Legation in Berlin by the German authorities. He mentioned some of the main Soviet pretensions. Lecca underlined that Finland rejected the idea of a dictate and decided on continuing the resistance. Helsinki was willing to reach only a negotiated solution (dossier 3, pp. 75-76, telegram no. 126, 21 February 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

The Finns played once again unsuccessfully the Swedish card. The Finnish top officials paid visits to Stockholm (dossier 3, p. 78, telegram no. 128, 24 February 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). All they received was a re-affirmance of the absolute neutrality of Sweden made by the Swedish Prime Minister (dossier 3, p. 78, telegram no. 128, 24 February 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

By the end of February, the general picture of the war was worsening for the Finns. The Russians learnt from the defeat during the first part of the war and made better usage of their overall numerical superiority. The Romanian minister transmitted however to Bucharest that all the major parts with an interest in this war, the Soviet Union, Germany and Finland – unless Great Britain and France – were aiming, from different reasons, to end the hostilities. Yet, since the Finns would not accept anything but a honourable peace, the war was going to continue, predicted Lecca (dossier 3, pp. 79-80, telegram no. 129, 27 February 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

In order to get a clearer picture of the on-going developments, the Romanian minister approached Väinö Tanner, the Finnish foreign minister by the time. According to George Lecca's intelligence, Tanner had just returned from a second secret mission in Stockholm. Lecca was told that the war turned worse and worse to Finland. Tanner underlined that Finland had to face a big power alone. She could not thus resist unlimited. The only going out at this stage was to seek a peace. This peace would be a temporary one. Tanner was optimistic about the outcome of the general war. He believed that whoever would win the war, would understand the reasons why Finland had to stop the resistance and conclude peace. Then, the winners will definitely re-establish Finland in her historical rights (dossier 3, p. 81, telegram no. 175, 1 March 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

The parliamentary debate upon the Soviet conditions for concluding a peace was full of drama. Lecca analysed the main trends in the Finnish political circles, public opinion and military. He also mentioned in his report to Bucharest the re-iteration of the English-French offer of support for Finland. The Soviet terms for ending the war were also sent to Bucharest. He insisted upon the Soviets demands for Karelian Isthmus, for a strip of territory situated north of Lake Ladoga with the town of Sortavala; Hango Peninsula with the neighbouring islands; the concluding of a mutual assistance pact for defending the Finnish Gulf. Finland had already accepted the Soviet terms in right time, Lecca informed Bucharest (dossier 3, pp. 83-85, telegram no. 200, 3 March 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

The hostilities were still going on when the Finnish government gave his final acceptance to the Soviet conditions of peace. It had been a difficult choice, since the Allies grew up their promised military support to 50,000 soldiers, the Romanian Legation in Helsinki informed Bucharest. Väinö Tanner hesitated till the last minute. The government



decided upon sending a delegation to enter into contact as quick as possible with the Soviets (dossier 3, p. 88, telegram no. 178, 7 March 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). The final peace was correctly understood in the Romanian Foreign Ministry as a solution reached to because of the overwhelming military superiority of the Soviets. In a commentary to the re-establishing of a kind of new workable relations in-between Finland and Soviet Union, the Romanian charge d'affaire in Helsinki, Govella, insisted upon one of the Finnish government members statement that they were due to be "correct but cool". The departure of Väinö Tanner from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the appointment of Marshall Mannerheim's friend, General Walden, into the government, commented Govella, were meant to normalise this relationship (dossier 3, p. 93, telegram no. 262, 28 March 1939, Govella to Bucharest).

Looking to an answer to be given to the question why Finland behave so heroically in the war, the secretary of the Legation, Govella, insisted in a long report of six pages on the paramilitary organisations such as the Civil Guard and Lotta Svärd. They were the clue for the perfect working of the army and the high mood within it. He undertook on a long description of the way these organisations appeared and what their were aiming to. He concluded that thanks to them, the Finnish army could rise 500,000 soldiers out of a total population of 3,850,000 inhabitants. They brought great services to the whole nation, Govella underlined. They were also responsible for the unity of the Finnish nation facing the war (dossier 10 p. 205-211, report no. 1025, 27 November 1939, Govella to Bucharest).

### **1.b. Romania and Finland during the Winter War**

It is not our intention to look to the whole complexity of the Romanian-Finnish relationship during this critical period in the Finnish nation's existence. We are just trying to point out two initiatives of co-operation during this time. The first initiative to deal with is a Romanian General Staff request as a 3 officers commission to get the Finnish agreement for visiting the front line. They were to be given, in case of a Finnish accept, the mission to answer four questions:

1. What is and how works the Finnish armament;
2. How the Finnish ski fighters were fighting and how this tactic could be adopted by the Romanian army;
3. How is organised the provision issue;
4. How well resisted the boats of the Finnish army (dossier 3, p. 66, telegram no. 5050, 29 January 1939, Cretzianu to Helsinki).

The answer was received more than a month later. The Finnish government could not accept the request of the Romanian military. Switzerland also made the same request to Helsinki and had been refused, the Finnish diplomatic note stated (dossier 3, p. 82, telegram no. 156, 1 March 1939, Lecca to Bucharest).

During the war Romania have sent its military attache to Helsinki. He has established his contact with the Finnish General Staff on February, 2<sup>nd</sup> (dossier 3, p. 72, telegram no. 79, 10 March 1939, Lecca to Bucharest). He was asked on February 10<sup>th</sup> by the Finnish military whether Romania could support Finland with cannons and ammunition. Specifically, the Finnish authorities were requesting certain types of weaponry, especially of Russian provenience (dossier 3, p. 71, telegram no. 89, 10 March 1939, Lecca to the Romanian General Staff, Bucharest). The Romanian General Staff answered in two days that it could not accept the Finnish request since that armament was an indispensable part of the Romanian army weaponry (dossier 3, p. 74, telegram no. 8251, 12 March 1939,



Cretzianu to Helsinki). Both these initiatives ended as a failure. Yet, they represent an example of the egoistic approach a small country is due to take in the international relations facing with a great war out of its control.

## **2. The Romanian press and the Winter War**

From the beginning of the German-Polish war, which would mark the start of the Second World War, the Romanian press understood the difficulties that the small countries will meet in the attempt to preserve their independence and integrity. This general attitude was commune for almost all the Romanian newspapers: "Universul", "Timpul", "Romania" and so on.

Since Romania had a monarchist authoritarian regime, with Carol II ruling the country, the censorship made the comments of this press more or less alike. Thus, in making our points clearer, we will analyse only the comments of the Romanian official newspaper called "Romania" edited by the famous novelist Cezar Petrescu. We used in our research several other newspapers and journals but nothing odd to the official line have ever been found.

In an editorial from September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, titled "Romanian prologue to a drama from outside our borders", Cezar Petrescu stated that: "one has to bear in one's mind that the empires that are disputing their rights, as they understand them, are supported by strong nations, who whatever the fate of the war would be, will remain for hundreds and thousands years from now on, actors on the international scene. The small nations, lacking a strong vitality, which could renew from time to time their powers, are facing the risk of disappearing themselves within the fight of the giants, as the grains are melted in-between the millstones" ("Romania", September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939). Within this general view of the events, there're many comments on the Finnish-Soviet relationship. Since 16<sup>th</sup> October, the Soviet claims to the Finns received a almost daily attention. In an article called "The Soviet demands on Finland were disclosed", the information concerning the stage of the Soviet-Finnish negotiations is analysed. It was also noticed the mobilisation of the army taking place in Finland ("Romania", October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1939). The Soviet demands as they were known in the Western press were also published in the pages of "Romania" (17<sup>th</sup> October), "Timpul", "Universul" and other Romanian newspapers. The Northern States Conference taking place in October received a special attention from the Romanian newspapers. "Romania" published parts of the discourses of the Swedish and Danish kings, as well as of the Finnish president ("Romania", 21<sup>st</sup> October). The editor of the foreign pages of "Romania", Jean Paleologu, commented in the foreign chronicle the Stockholm Conference. He wrote a short history of the Northern Conference and underscored the solidarity of those countries taking part in it, and also the support for Finland given by the Scandinavians. The letter sent to Kalinin by President Roosevelt and the Stockholm Conference, predicted Paleologu, were going to easy the agreement between Finland and Soviet Union ("Romania", 19<sup>th</sup> October). The solidarity of the Scandinavian countries with Finland was also remarked in "Romania" on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The English newspapers "The Times" and "Daily Telegraph" were also referred to in demonstrating this solidarity.

Although the general picture of the Soviet-Finnish negotiations and the coming war were - generally speaking - correctly understood by the Romanian newspapers, and the Romanian public got valuable news from their pages, they abstain for making any comments that would have displeased Moscow. This was part of a policy aimed at appeasing Moscow and not giving her any reasons of complaining about Romania's



attitude. For instance, “Romania” published a large map of Finland that showed out the areas claimed by Soviet Union (“Romania”, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939). The newspaper pointed out the main lines of the Finnish attitude (the willingness to defend her neutrality and security) (“Romania”, November 3<sup>rd</sup>) and Soviet Union (Soviet Union is obliged to secure the security of Leningrad, with a population equal with that of Finland) (“Romania”, November 4<sup>th</sup>).

Moscow was willing to get its claims fulfilled in a peaceful way, but was also ready to enforce their fulfillment with the use of force. On the other hand, Finland was prepared to accept 75% of the Russian demands, but as Erkko, the Finnish foreign minister had declared, “we cannot do more if we were to preserve the name of an independent state for the future”, underlined “Romania” (November 6<sup>th</sup>). Since in the Hango issue had not been reached an agreement (“Romania”, November 16<sup>th</sup>), and the Soviet press tried to demonstrate that Finland was looking for a military conflict with Moscow (“Romania”, November 18<sup>th</sup>), the reader of the Romanian press would have understood that the war was not out of question in the Soviet-Finnish relations. Such allegation in the Soviet press were very often, as in the inner matters too, followed by an aggressive policy.

One had to read between the rows of the Romanian press, indeed. For instance, on November 28<sup>th</sup> “Romania” published the Soviet accusations on Finland. Helsinki was accused of firing to the Soviet border guards and killing several soldiers. It was only next day that “Romania” published the Finnish response. This attitude preserved practically unchanged during the Winter War. Romanian press continued to publish reports from the war, to monitor the various phases of the war, to publish the statements made by the principle actors of the conflict or of the Great Powers personalities, but refrain from accusing Soviet Union of unprovoked aggression (“Romania”, “Timpul”, “Universul”, December 1939 – March 1940). It was only the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga who, in his review, on November 1939 and March 1940 (“Neamul Romanesc pentru Popor”, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1940), accused the Soviet Union of aggression against Finland and the Baltic states (Silviu Miloiu, 2002). Iorga wrote: “Upon these nations has spread an eagerness that is insatiable” (“Neamul Romanesc pentru Popor”, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1940).

The Romanian society reacted to the Winter war through many letters of support for the Finns and of admiration for their braveness proved during the war. Not only personalities, but simple people wrote to the Finnish Legation to express their feelings. Among these letters, recorded in the Archive of the Finnish Foreign Ministry and Finnish National Archive, one of them, wrote by General Radu Rosetti, a hero of the First World War, is full of compassion and support for the Finns.

### **3. The Winter War and its influences upon Romania's international status**

Romania was also covered by the provisions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop secret protocol. Except Poland, the Soviet policy seemed to have been to occupied piece by piece the territory granted in the Great Powers share of influence, starting with the easiest task to the most difficult one. Thus the Baltic countries came first to be dealt with. They complied with Soviet demands. Then came the Finnish turn. Finland was felt to be a more difficult task to overcome than the Baltic one, but not as difficult as Romania. The Finnish tough resistance came as a surprise to the Soviets. This way they had to postpone the presenting of their claims to Romania which was due to take place in the Spring of 1940. The Finnish courage accordingly save several months of preparedness for Romania, as the Romania historians Ion Constantin (1995) and Florin Constantiniu (2002) have underlined.



#### 4. Conclusion

The Winter War was one of the most important events taking place in-between Germany and Russia during the first year of the World War II. The Romanian diplomacy understood that in the developments of the Soviet-Finnish negotiations and thereafter war laid one of the keys to the Russian foreign policy aims. The Russian policy toward Finland had its impact on the Romanian-Russian relationship. Romania could have better prepared herself to deal with Russia if she would have learnt out of the Finnish case. The censorship of the Romanian press made the research of the Romanians mood toward the war more difficult for the researcher. It has to be connected with the perceptions the Finnish Legacy got from many ordinary Romanians. Probably the general view was related to the dictum: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Moreover, the Winter War is still popular in Romania and this has to do with the anti-Russian feelings among the Romanians because of the bad record of their bilateral relations with Russia, and because of the defiance with which a small power defended its country against a Great Power. And, why not, this war extended the time for preparedness Romania had with several months, as the Romanian historiography remarked.

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