

**Romania inside the Big Powers Play: The International Straits Commission
(1924-1933)**

Büyük Güçlerin Oyunu İçinde Romanya: Uluslararası Boğazlar Komisyonu (1924-1933)

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Abstract

The present article analyzes the activity of Romanian diplomacy in the International Straits Commission from 1924 to 1933 in the lights of the unpublished documents found in the Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The study reveals the discussions inside of the International Straits Commission which had to clarify the issues that concern them such as the head office of ISC, the internal regulation of ISC, the ranking of the delegations, disputes with the flag, gratuities to ISC members, the meeting of ISC members, the elaboration of the ISC budget, the drawing up of the list of naval forces of the powers bordering the Black Sea, the transit passage of capital ships through the Straits, the work of ISC regarding coding various rules applied to maritime and air navigation in the Straits, the regime of merchant ships in the Port of Istanbul and of those in transit passage through the Straits, the sanitary charges levied to merchant ships in transit passage, navigation restrictions for merchant ships in the Gulf of Izmit.

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The activity of the International Straits Commission and the activity of the Romanian diplomacy thereto had only constituted tangential preoccupations in the Romanian historiography. Consulting the Romanian diplomatic archives (fund 8 Conv/S1, the League of Nations) offers interesting information regarding the main issues debated during ISC but also the occasion of meeting elite diplomats such as G. Filality, V. Anastasiu and G. Ionescu, as well.

Keywords: Straits, Lausanne Conference, Romanian-Turkish relations, International Straits Commission, Great Powers

Özet

Makale, Romanya Dışişleri Bakanlığı Diplomatik Arşivi'nden elde edilen yayımlanmamış belgeler ışığında 1924-1933 yılları arasında Romanya'nın Uluslararası Boğazlar Komisyonu'ndaki (UBK) diplomatik faaliyetlerini analiz etmektedir.

Çalışma UBK'nun kendilerini ilgilendiren ve açıklığa kavuşturmak durumunda oldukları sorunları ele almaktadır. Bunlar; UBK'nun merkez ofisi, UBK'nin iç düzenlemesi, heyetlerin sıralamaları, bayrak hakkındaki anlaşmazlıklar, UBK üyelerine verilen ikramiyeler, UBK üyelerinin toplantısı, UBK bütçesinin detaylandırılması, Karadeniz'e kıyısı olan ülkelerin deniz kuvvetlerinin listesinin çıkarılması, büyük askeri gemilerin Boğazlardan geçişi, Boğazlarda denizcilik ve havacılık seyrüseferine uygulanan çeşitli kuralların kodlanmasıyla ilgili UBK'nın çalışmaları, İstanbul Limanı'ndaki ve Boğazlardan transit geçiş yapan ticaret gemileri ile ilgili düzenleme, transit geçiş yapan ticaret gemilerine uygulanan sağlık koruma ücretleri ve İzmit Körfezi'nde ticaret gemilerine uygulanan sınırlamalardır.

UBK ve Romanya diplomasisinin faaliyeti Romen tarih yazımında detaylandırılmayan bir konu olmuştur. Romanya Diplomatik Arşivi'nden temin edilen belgelerin (fund 8/ Conv/S1, the League of Nations) ve yine arşivde elde edilen belgelerde yer alan Romanya'nın seçkin diplomatları G. Filality, V. Anastasiu ve G. Ionescu'ya ait yazışmaların değerlendirilmesi sonucunda konuyla ilgili özgün bilgiler elde edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Boğazlar, Lozan Konferansı, Romanya-Türk İlişkileri, Uluslararası Boğazlar Komisyonu, Büyük Güçler

Introduction

Grigore Antipa once asserted that the Mouths of the Danube were at the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Therefore, the entire economic life of the river depended on the regime of freedom of navigation through the Straits. During World War I, the Romanian economy was suffocated

because the Straits were closed. Thus, 65% of Romania's import came by waterways to Constanța and through the Mouths of the Danube, to Galați and Brăila, while 95% of Romania's export was heading from these towns to the Mediterranean and the Adriatic Seas *via* the Dardanelles. The closure of the Straits together with all its economic consequences made it one of the main and most debated issues of foreign policy by the Romanian elite and the public opinion until Lausanne¹.

Romania decided to expedite the appointment of a Romanian representative alongside the High Allies in Constantinople in order to be in direct connection with the representatives of the Great Powers and to better defend Romania's interests in the matter of the Straits, "our "lung" for economic breathing"². Likewise, specific tendencies and geopolitical considerations of the states in the Black Sea region were outlined, which determined political constants.

Russia, a continent-wide state, captive of its geographic position, closed by the Arctic ice in the North, prisoner of the British colonies in the South, bathed by geographically closed seas in the West, was fighting for the opening of routes to the free seas of the world, a struggle imposed by its economic, military and political interests³. Russia wished either to ensure its control upon the Straits in a direct way or by influencing Turkey, or that the Straits should be closed for all. The first step was domination of the Mouths of the Danube which meant an open gate to the heart of Europe, and domination of the Balkans. The second step was the help granted to the Serbs and to the Bulgarians, pushing the former toward Thessaloniki and the latter toward Kavalla. The third step was to establish a bridge between the Slav tentacles in the Balkans. The Crimean war imposed a limit on the Russian expansion (Paris, March 30, 1856). Russia would react with hostility against any international bodies that impeded its freedom of action and its exercising exclusive control over the Mouths of the Danube. As of 1812, Russia became riparian to the Danube on the Chilia branch, Sulina branch (1817/Constantinople, 1826/Akerman) and Saint George branch (1829, Adrianople). After its setback in 1856, Russia returned to the Danube (Berlin, 1878) and received the Chilia branch (1883). Soviet Russia wished to annihilate the British influence over the Straits, and its support for Turkey left the impression that the issue was not closed for good.

Britain⁴ wished to preserve imperial control over communications and to defend the freedom of navigation on the Danube, mainly after 1829 when the import of Romanian cereals increased. At Lausanne, Chicherin, the Soviet representative, demanded the closure of the Straits

¹ C. Diamany, *Problema Strâmtorilor*, în *** *Politica externă a României*, București, Ed. Cultura Națională, p. 205

² Dului Zamfirescu, *Bosforul și Dardanele față de interesele românești*, București, 1915, p. 21-2

³ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801-1917*, Oxford University Press, 1967, *passim.*; John C.K. Daly, *Russian Seapower and the Eastern Question: 1827-1841*, Palgrave Macmillan, 199, *passim.*

⁴ Daniel Foliard, *Dislocating the Orient. British Maps and the Making of the Middle East (1854-1921)*, The University of Chicago Press, 2017, *passim.*

to warships, and Turkey's sovereignty. Thus a middle wall separating the Russian and the British spheres of influence would be built. This made Lord Curzon state that he did not expect to see Mr. Chicherin, who represented so many states, wear a Turkish hat on his head as well.

France, feeling its positions in Levant jeopardised by the increase of Britain's influence, showed a more and more noticeable tendency of sustaining the new Turkey. Monopoly of ideas and strength would always be foreign to the French spirit. Nevertheless, the path to freedom was impeded by a sense of precaution. The German threat would be balanced by getting closer to Russia.

Turkey, at the Straits, fulfilled the same mission as Romania at the Mouths of the Danube, thus providing a guarantee of peace and balance in the way of the movement of forces which could upset Europe's equilibrium. The international policy was determined by the fact that the Straits ran through the Turkish national territory, coupled with the influence Russia's terrestrial pressure and Britain's maritime presence had always exerted upon its policy. Turkey's essential issue was the problem of security, its tendency of controlling the Straits itself by virtue of the right to sovereignty and defence.

Having no other maritime "breathing", the Black Sea riparian states would invoke complete freedom of the Straits — demilitarisation and international control — based on the same sovereignty right which could be construed as economic and political freedom. As to Russia's particular expansion tendency, Turkey's interest was to seek a counterbalance to the Russian pressure, and that is why Turkey would accept a regime of internationalisation and demilitarisation, but only upon receiving a safety guarantee by the organisation of collective security or by special agreements with the Great Powers⁵. Otherwise, it would accept Russia's support in achieving a formula of internationalisation limited to commercial navigation.

At Lausanne Conference, Romania demanded freedom of passage through the Straits for merchant vessels and warships, demilitarisation of the Bosphorus Coasts and the setting up of the Straits Commission, similar to the Danube Commission. The intention was that the key to the Straits should not be in the pocket of a single Power that could open or close the door at will. The economic and geostrategic importance of the Straits led to a fight in the arena of the Great Powers. The passage of French-British naval units through the Straits to the Black Sea was essential to Romania in case of a Soviet attack.

⁵ Trandafir G. Djuvara, *Cent Projets de partage de la Turquie (1281-1913)*, Paris, 1914; Barbara Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers and the Straits Question (1870-1887)*, Indiana University Press, 1973, *passim*.

Mention must be made that, on the eve of Lausanne Conference, between Romania and Turkey as riparian countries interested in the regime of the Straits, meetings were held at diplomatic level in order to clarify the position of the parties in the matter. Moreover, both states wished to take the opportunity related to the conference in order to put out feelers to the possibility of resuming their diplomatic relations. I. G. Duca and C. Diamandi met Ismet Pasha in order to assure him of friendship feelings and to explain the fact that the Romanian thesis on the Straits was trying to “reconcile the Turkish sovereignty with the legitimate needs of the Romanian sovereignty”. *Tanin* Newspaper of 2 May 1924 wrote that “opening the Straits, ensuring Romania’s commercial traffic, the most complete freedom actually suppressed any possibility of friction between the two countries”.

Romania accepted the appointment of Cevat Bey as official representative of Turkey which constituted a novelty in diplomatic practices, namely, resumption of diplomatic relations before the Peace Treaty was ratified. During World War I, Romania and Turkey were in opposing coalitions. The diplomatic relations between the two countries were interrupted on August 20, 1916 and were resumed on July 20, 1922 by the appointment of G. Filality as High Commissioner in Turkey and of Cevat Bey as representative of Turkey to Bucharest.

The solution adopted on July 24, 1923 at the Straits Convention was a formula of international collective mandate, Turkey remaining sovereign on the shores of the Straits.

There were two theses: a British one, *mare apertum*, meaning open sea according to maritime common practice, and the Russian one, *mare clausum*, sea closed for navigation to warships of non-riparian states.

The Activity of the Romanian Diplomacy at the International Straits Commission

The Convention related to the Regime of the Straits ratified along with the Peace Treaty of Lausanne became effective in August 1924, at the same time as the Treaty. In compliance with Articles 10-16 of the Convention, an International Straits Commission (hereinafter referred to as “ISC”) was going to be constituted at Constantinople. ISC opened its works at the beginning of the month of November 1924⁶.

⁶ AMAE (Romanian : *Arhivele Diplomatice ale Ministerului Afacerilor Externe*) = Diplomatic Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest), fund 8/S, vol. 1, Telegram sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the appointment of the Romanian representative to ISC (October 4, 1924, Constantinople), n. pag. (no pagination)

The first representative of Romania to the ISC was Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister Plenipotentiary in Turkey⁷. He was followed by G. G. Ionescu, Consul General, from October 15, 1929 to May 1, 1932 when Vasile Anastasiu, Legation Counsellor, was appointed. The appointment of elite Romanian diplomats to the ISC was a good decision of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nevertheless, the position was widely disputed by the Inspectorate of the Navy who wanted to appoint a navy counsellor to ISC. G. Filality mentioned that the appointment of a navy counsellor to ISC brought about extra expenses for the state, and that each country had one delegate, only. There were three diplomats to ISC (France, Italy and Romania), three naval military attachés (Britain, Japan and Greece) and a general (Bulgaria). As USSR did not ratify, and Yugoslavia did not sign the Straits Convention, these two countries declined participation to ISC.

Once constituted, the Commission began its activity in compliance with its duties.

The first issue was to establish the *head office* of ISC in the Tophane Pavilion [Tophane Kasrı/ Köşkü] that was made available by the Turkish Government. Initially, payment was required but later, it was made available free of charge⁸. The second issue was to establish French as official language and English as optional. Since the Italian representative wanted Italian to be used, English was dropped⁹.

At the meeting of February 14, 1925, the *Internal Regulation of ISC*¹⁰ was adopted, which G. Filality reported to Bucharest as having been drawn up almost entirely by himself, taking as model the one of the European Danube Commission and the one of the League of Nations. Furthermore, three sub-commissions were instituted: *The Financial Sub-Commission* (Bulgaria, France and Italy), *The Legal and Economic Sub-Commission* (France, Italy and Romania) and *The Technical Sub-Commission* (Great Britain, Greece and Japan).

The Ranking of the delegations was established according to the alphabetical order of the country names.

⁷ *Ibidem*, Telegram sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the appointment of the Romanian Kingdom representative to ISC (October 4, 1924, Constantinople), n. pag.

⁸ *Ibidem*, Note sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the rent payment for Tophane Pavilion (November 7, 1924, Constantinople), n. pag.

⁹ *Ibidem*, Note sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, about ISC official language (April 10, 1925, Constantinople), n. pag.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, Note sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, concerning the elaboration of ISC Bylaws (November 17, 1924, Constantinople), n. pag.

At the meeting of February 25, 1925, ISC decided to have a distinctive *flag*¹¹ of its own, as did the European Danube Commission (EDC), to be raised both on the head office of the Commission, and on its own ships. Admiral Vastf Pasha opposed to the flag being raised on the head office of ISC, therefore he “arrested” the flag. This incident was solved by G. Filality who proposed that ISC should pass a vote of censure against the President on grounds of abuse of power because Admiral Vastf declined to enforce the decision of ISC. Moreover, the delegates informed their governments by notice about this proceeding they deemed incorrect. The diplomat G. Filality concluded that the Great Powers would seek to spare the Turks’ susceptibility, and ISC could emerge weakened out of this and without a flag, as well. Therefore the economic and political-diplomatic interests rose above the flag.

Furthermore, Turkey was not willing to acknowledge ISC as *an international institution*, or ISC representatives as heads of missions, implicitly. They did not benefit from tax or customs exemptions for incurred expenses, which affected the ISC budget¹².

Another issue under discussion was granting *gratuities to ISC members* and to their families on Italian shipping lines or applying a 50% discount on Romanian Maritime Service (SMR)’s Ships. It was established that *the meeting of ISC members* should be held once a week, and, between July 15 and September 15, weekly meetings were suspended; the President was to convene the members in exceptional cases only. As of 1930, they would meet twice a month.

The *ISC Budget* was elaborated, whereby, in compliance with Article 13 of the Convention, the states represented to the Straits Commission were to incur expenses in a proportion as specified in the expenditures distribution of the League of Nations.

Another issue under discussion was regarding on time information about the traffic of warships through the Straits: signal stations¹³. They were installed by the Turkish Government at Sedd el Bahr [Seddülbahir] and at Büyük Liman. During the year 1926, the Commission discussed whether it would be appropriate that the stations should be internationalised, a fact which was not agreed to by the Turkish Government because there were no provisions in the Straits Convention in the matter.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, Note sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, with regard to the ISC flag (April 10, 1925, Constantinople), n. pag.

¹² *Ibidem*, Note sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, regarding the participation share to the budget of the League of Nations (March 29, 1925, Constantinople), n. pag.

¹³ *Ibidem*, Report sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, about the signal stations (July 3, 1925, Constantinople), n. pag.

Another issue was the *Drawing up the List of Naval Forces of the Powers Bordering the Black Sea* and of the *Transit Passage of Capital Ships through the Straits*. In compliance with the provisions of the Lausanne Convention, the Straits Commission would address twice a year (on January 1 and on July 1) to the governments of the Black Sea riparian states requiring precise data on the composition of their naval forces. A commission made up of three technicians was appointed (Britain, Japan and Greece), assigned to collect accurate information on the war fleets of the Black Sea riparian states.

The first issue was to establish the *List of the Most Powerful Fleet in the Black Sea* namely, the Soviet fleet¹⁴. The Soviet authorities would send such information with delay, through the Turkish Government, not direct to ISC. Upon the Romanian delegate's suggestion, the list of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea provided by the Soviet Government had to be corroborated with the lists sent by the Italian, French, British and Japanese navy attachés that were in Moscow or with the observations made by the Romanian navy. It is noticeable that the Russian Government would also include Wrangel's fleet in the list, which they considered temporarily absent but underlined that they would not give it up. In January 1930, G. Ionescu informed Bucharest that the Soviet military vessels *Parijskaya*, *Kommuna* and *Profintern* which were part of the Russian fleet in the Baltic Sea, crossed the Straits with the destination Sevastopol¹⁵. The increase of the Soviet fleet in the Black Sea worried the Romanian Government which started seeking to find out the opinion of the main capital cities on the matter, but also on the alleged existence of a Turkish-Italian-Soviet secret agreement.

The second matter was to request the number of warships from each Black Sea riparian powers as was stipulated in Paragraph II of the Annex to the Straits Convention.

Romania sent the list through the Inspectorate of the Navy, and Bulgaria, having been disarmed by the Treaty of Neuilly, did not possess any war navy unit. Turkey refused to send the list but, by collection of information, G. Filality made a detailed list of the Turkish military ships.

The Lausanne Treaty provided that, in order to calculate the military forces, only the number and **TYPE** of capital ships could be taken into account¹⁶. The Romanian Inspectorate of the Navy responded to G. Filality's request regarding the definition of the word *type*, and as to the

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, Telegram no. 7745 of February 6, 1930 signed by G.G. Mironescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation of Romania in Paris regarding the increase of the Soviet fleet in the Black Sea (February 6, 1930, Bucharest), n. pag.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, Telegram no. 316 of February 8, 1930 from the Royal Legation of Romania in Rome to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the increase of the Soviet fleet in the Black Sea (February 8, 1930, Rome), n. pag.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, Report sent by the Navy Inspectorate, Ministry of War, to I.G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the number and type of armed capital ships (December 4, 1925, Bucharest), n. pag.

total force of the ships that could enter the Black Sea, it had to be at least equal to the total number of armed ships in reserve and available in the table presented by the Soviets. In July 1927, G. Filality explained the fact that ISC could not give another interpretation to the word “type”, therefore, any foreign power could introduce the same number of warships without being concerned about either tonnage, or armament¹⁷.

Another issue discussed at ISC was related to the transit passage of aircraft over the Straits. G. Filality wrote that looking at the map attached to the *Air Navigation Regulations of Turkey* (September 9, 1925), one could easily conclude that the Turkish Government exceeded the prescriptions provided for in the Straits Convention by declaring as forbidden areas certain portions of the Straits where air navigation had to be free. In June 1929, 35 Italian flying boats entered the Black Sea, thus exceeding the Soviet air fleet of 21. The Italian delegate mentioned that only 21 aircraft entered the Black Sea, the rest being turned back to the Marmara Sea where they arrived by another route at the same time with the other ones at Varna¹⁸.

Another issue was to elaborate an ISC Report for the League of Nations, a report that has always been disputed by the Turks¹⁹. An important activity of the ISC was the one regarding *Coding Various Rules Applied to Maritime and Air Navigation in the Straits*. ISC requested the Turkish Authorities to shed light on those parts of the regulations in force that could lead to difficulties of construction or implementation in practice. The Turkish authorities had most of the time been willing to make amendments to the administrative regulations in order to enable shipping companies to operate their commercial routes²⁰. Since such amendments were not made, the Turkish authorities were given instructions to enforce the various regulations in a liberal spirit.

There had been a lot of debates during ISC related to the *sanitary charges* levied to merchant ships in transit passage. In compliance with the Turkish regulations in force, merchant ships in transit passage through the Straits were subject to a sanitary control and related dues payment. The sanitary control would take place at Çanakkale for ships sailing from the Mediterranean Sea and at Büyükdere for those coming from the Black Sea. This provision was enforced by *the General*

¹⁷*Ibidem*, Report sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister to the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on how the word “type” is construed by the Commission (January 19, 1926, Constantinople), n. pag.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, Report signed by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to G. G. Mironescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 35 Italian aircraft flying over from the Bosphorus to the Black Sea (June 15, 1929, Constantinople), n. pag.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, Report signed by George Ionescu, Consul General of Romania in Istanbul, to G. G. Mironescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the ISC Report for the year 1929 (March 24, 1930, Constantinople), n. pag.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, Telegram sent by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister to the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to Ion Mitileneu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, about the submission of the Turkish Regulations content regarding pilotage and towage service (March 24, 1927, Constantinople), n. pag.

Directorate for Health of the Coasts and Borders of Turkey in compliance with the Old Turkish Health Regulation of 1885²¹.

The complaints of the Romanian maritime authorities regarding such vexatious Turkish practices determined G. Filality to ask Prof. I. Cantacuzino, the representative of Romania attending the session of the *International Office of Public Health* (Paris, 1926), to draw the attention of the Turkish delegate that the regulation of 1871 had to comply with the International Sanitary Convention of January 17, 1912. The situation was considered “weird” by G. Filality because merchant ships transiting the Straits were compelled to embark two health-guards on board, at the entrance, and to disembark them at the other end. Turkey would not ratify the *International Sanitary Convention* signed in Paris, on June 21, 1926. The economic crisis determined the Great Powers to take a more intransigent stand on such sanitary charges levied to ships in transit passage through the Straits (*Aide mémoire* of Great Britain, February 1931).

The merchant vessels passing through the Straits had to pay *a special charge for maintaining the Turkish Life Saving Service*²². ISC notified the Turkish Government that such charge was quite high and mostly Turkish ships benefited from this service and not foreign ones.

Another matter was modernising and finding most adequate means to aid navigation. To this purpose, the Turkish authorities employed a Dutch expert in 1927. Little progress was made, as is proved by numerous discussions inside the ISC (1931-1932) to find better means of guiding ship captains at the entrance of the Bosphorus during bad weather. The Romanian delegate proposed the installation of a rotary wireless telegraph apparatus. In 1931, ISC sent a note to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the authorities installed a light buoy with a bell instead of a lightship. The Romanian delegate G. Ionescu submitted the conclusions to the investigation on installing radio direction finders, but the ISC proposal was rejected by the Turkish Ministry of National Economy who invoked financial and technical reasons. The elaboration of a study followed and the Romanian navy agreed to the installation at the entrance to the Bosphorus of two radio direction finders which communicated the characteristics of the lighthouses of Constanța and Caliacra²³. The issue of radio direction finders was inserted into the Report for the year 1932

²¹ *Ibidem*, Report signed by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to G. G. Mironescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the poor administration of the Istanbul Port (December 10, 1928, Constantinople), n. pag.

²² *Ibidem*, Report signed by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to G. G. Mironescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on non-enforcement of the Sanitary Convention of Paris (January 10, 1929, Constantinople), n. pag.

²³ *Ibidem*, Note no. 3790 of 22 April of the Ministry of Public Works and of Communications (Autonomous Directorate of Ports and Waterways) to the Ministry of National Defence (General Inspectorate of the Royal Navy), concerning placing radio-beacons in Constanța and Caliacra (April 22, 1933, Bucharest), n. pag.

to the League of Nations by V. Anastasiu and the British delegate. The Romanian captains had warned V. Anastasiu about the lack of horns at the lighthouse in San Stefano (Yeşilköy) and the latter informed Vassif Pasha about it.

Another matter discussed at ISC was related to imposing *navigation restrictions for merchant ships in the Gulf of İzmit* by the Turkish Government in 1926²⁴. The British Government considered that the restrictions imposed by the Turkish Government were in contradiction with Art.1 of the Straits Convention having in view that İzmit was part of the Marmara Sea and the latter was part of the Straits. G. Filality embraced the British point of view although he considered that the Turks were right because that was a Turkish military basis and did not disturb the freedom of navigation. The restrictions were lifted in 1931.

Likewise, *closing navigation through the Bosphorus* as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk came to Istanbul led to protests of ISC representatives who sent a notice to the Turkish government demanding to be informed in advance²⁵.

The Turkish authorities had certain reasons to hinder the implementation of the principle of freedom of navigation, i.e. those related to the relationships that Turkey had with one state or another. One example was Greece, with which Turkey had ongoing talks on the matter of exchange of populations or of signing a commercial convention²⁶.

All foreign navigation agencies protested to the Turkish government against monopolisation, in the year 1927, of the *Pilotage Service* in favour of the Navigation Administration which would impose its pilots and set very high tariffs, as well. Levying excessive charges and taxes (sanitary, lighthouse, salvage and rescue, pilotage, quay, buoyage, towage, harbour) brought about not only costs to the ships in transit passage but also great delays in delivering goods. The charge issue remained unsolved until Montreux.

With regard to the commercial maritime traffic across the Straits, tables with the necessary particulars were attached: flag, number of ships that operated in Istanbul and of those in transit passage, as well as their tonnage.

²⁴*Ibidem*, Report signed by George Ionescu, Consul General of Romania in Istanbul, to D. Ghika, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the Port of İzmit (May 3, 1931, Istanbul), n. pag.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, Report signed by Gheorghe Filality, Romanian Minister at the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, to I. G. Duca, *ad interim* Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the Straits closure on the occasion of the arrival of Mustafa KEMAL, President of Turkey to Istanbul (June 15, 1928, Constantinople), n. pag.

²⁶*Ibidem*, Report signed by George Ionescu, Consul General of Romania in Istanbul, to G.G. Mironescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the difficulties caused to the Greek ships by the Turkish Sanitary Service (November 15, 1929, Constantinople), n. dpag.

Improvements regarding trade and freedom of navigation were accomplished as the new *Regulation of Istanbul Port* was enforced as of July 25, 1933. Also, ships in transit could get food supplies, coal and water (1927), could benefit from sanitary, police and customs control until 12 o'clock at night (16 August 1928), and maritime transports were ensured with regard to prevention of fire in the harbour (April 1930) and reduction of the rescue charge (1931).

The activity of the Romanian delegate at ISC also reflected itself in the evolution of the Romanian-Turkish relations. It is worth mentioning that until 1929, the diplomatic relations were cold, mainly because of the "Soviet factor". In February 1930, Tevfik Rüstü said he could not understand why the Romanian delegate was seeking to create a difficult situation for Turkey, as was the flag matter, considering that the League of Nations did not have one either²⁷. In his opinion, ISC had to be considered an institution similar to the Mixed Arbitrary Tribunals and had to comply with the stipulations of the Straits Convention.

The Romanian diplomats could understand Turkey's desire that its independence and sovereignty should be respected but, at the same time, they were observing the Treaty stipulations whereby navigation through the Straits had to be free in order to create an adequate framework for the trade of the Black Sea riparian countries with other regions of the world.

As regards the foreign policy, according to *Yurtta sulh, cibanda sulh* formula (Peace in the country, peace in the world), Turkey signed numerous agreements in order to normalise the relations with the neighbours and the Great Powers because, after Lausanne, it was compelled to focus its efforts on rebuilding its economy devastated by the war. Turkey, domestically strengthened, started making the first international steps with a view to amending the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne in accordance with the principles of observing the national sovereignty and independence. The necessity of these steps was consistent with the new realities of the international situation. Thus, fascism coming to power in Germany and Italy's policy in the Mediterranean Sea determined Turkey to solve this security issue by remilitarisation of the coasts and change of the Straits regime. In June 1932, the Legation of Romania in London mentioned that the Turkish government was carrying out diplomatic activities meant to abolish ISC or that Turkey conditioned its joining the League of Nations by the abolition of ISC, a fact denied by the Turks²⁸.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, Conversation Note written by Th. Scotzescu, the Royal Legation of Romania in Turkey, about the audience with Tevfik Rüstü Aras (April 28, 1930, Ankara), n. pag.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, Memo elaborated by N.N. Hiott on May 11, 1933 concerning the Straits Regime and the latest Turkish addresses to the World Disarmament Conference (May 11, 1933), n. pag.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, Romania and Turkey are linked by a traditional friendship, united by a geographical parallelism and historic destiny, Romania being at the Mouths of the Danube and Turkey at the Straits. The interests in the Black Sea unite us but maintaining a geopolitical balance in the Balkans is even more important.

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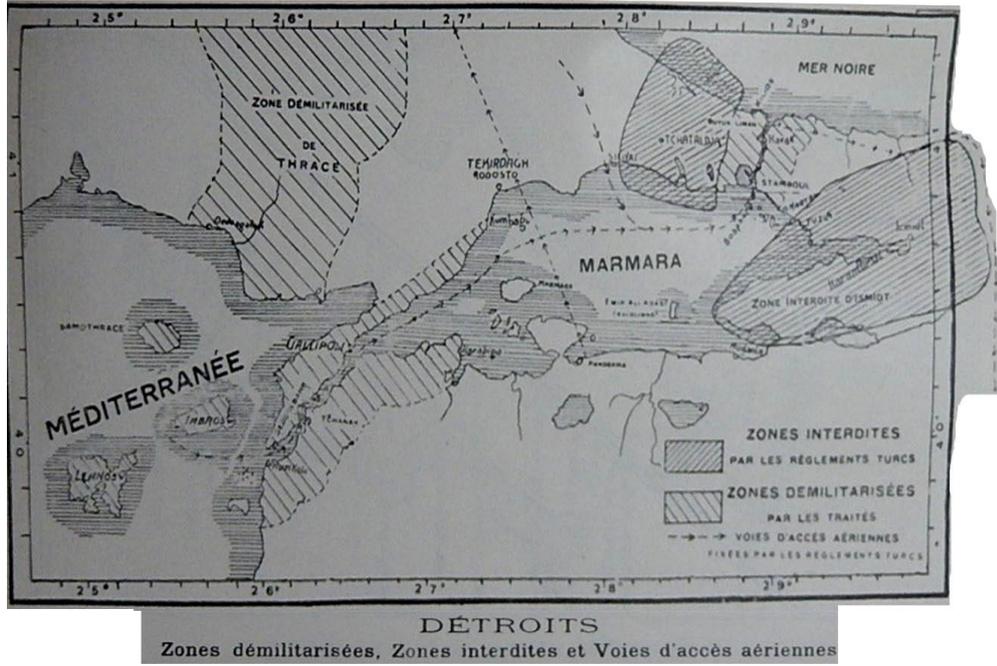
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Annex



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