

THE DIPLOMATIC STRUGGLE FOR GREATER ROMANIA*

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Abstract. The study presents the position that Ion I. C. Brătianu – Prime-Minister of Romania at the end of the World War I – had at the Paris Peace Conference, during the negotiations of the Peace Treaty with Austria. The Romanian Prime-Minister had the courage to uphold his country's claims before the Council of Four, clashing with the representatives of the Great Powers. The impressions of Ion I. C. Brătianu, shared by letters he sent from Paris to the members of his family or the interim Prime Minister in Bucharest, as well as transcripts of the plenary sessions of the Conference that took place at that time, are reproduced in this study.

Keywords: *Ion I. C. Brătianu; Paris Peace Conference; Treaty of Saint Germain*

The First World War irrupted between the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and their satellites) and the Powers of the Entente (France, England, Russia, which were joined along the way by Italy, Romania, etc.) – on July 28, 1914 – and it was concluded after almost five years of belligerence, through the required armistice of Austria-Hungary on November 3, 1918 and the capitulation of Germany on November 11, 1918. Following the closure of the Great International Conflagration, the “burst” of the general Peace was meant to set Europe upon renewed foundations, animated by the principles of President Wilson of the United States and vindicated by the national territorial moves that were to be validated and sanctioned within a reassuring system of treaties and alliances.

The Peace Conference opened in Paris, on January 18, 1919, in the presence of the delegations of 27 victorious States, including Romania. The Conference was formally chaired by the Council of Ten – composed of Heads of State or Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of the Great Powers. In fact, the Peace Conference was the prerogative of the Supreme Council made up of the US President Wilson, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George, the presidents of the

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Clemenceau Council of Ministers of France, Orlando of Italy and Soianji of Japan. Georges Clemenceau has been appointed President of the Peace Conference, and France was the host country for the historic international meeting.

On January 10, 1919, a representative and substantial delegation left Bucharest for the Paris Peace Conference: Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu – as head of the delegation and first delegate of Romania; delegates Nicolae Mișu, General Constantin Coandă, Alexandru Vaida Voievod, Dr. Ioan Cantacuzino, Nicolae Titulescu, Victor Antonescu, Constantin Diamandi, Dr. George Danielopol and others, accompanied by advisers and technical experts.

At the plenary session of the Paris Conference, held on January 25, 1919, Ion I. C. Brătianu spoke to present and support the national-territorial claims of his country, as well as Romania's place in the constellation of European States; he also expressed hope for the mission of the newly established League of Nations.

Otherwise, officially, the Prime Minister of Romania also had opportunities to preach and defend the post-war demands of his country: on February 22, 1919 during his meeting with members of the Territorial Affairs Commission of the Peace Conference and later, on 5 and 10 January 1919, at meetings with members of the Supreme Council held at the Parisian residence of US President Wilson. Prime Minister Lloyd George also invited Ion I. C. Brătianu to lunch; the conclusion after the discussions with the English Prime Minister was the following: "The ignorance of the continental European issues as well as the fact that for England the great results of the War are achieved, by annexing the colonies and destroying the German fleet, makes our task very difficult next to the British General"¹. The Italian Prime Minister Orlando had talks with Brătianu on the occasion of the lunch to which he had been invited.

Cooperating, the Prime Minister of Romania signed the peace treaty with Germany, sealed in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles, on June 28, 1919 – although the important issue of war reparations in which the Romanian state was directly interested had not been fully resolved. The irreconcilable diplomatic conflict between Ion I. C. Brătianu and the Supreme Council of the Big Four – Japan having a lesser decisional role – started when the signing of the peace treaty with Austria became the issue of the general discussion, in connection to the subject of the Statute of Nationalities.

Brătianu suggested that the Statute of Nationalities – providing independence and sovereignty to the smaller States – to be placed under the authority of the Society of Nations, but without any success. The British Empire fiercely opposed unwilling to lose the benefices of colonialism.

Aparated by the diplomatic battle fought in Paris, Brătianu still took short breaks to transmit to his family members in Bucharest, informative minutes from the sturdy defence of the independence and sovereignty of his homeland.

¹ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Activitatea politică și militară a României în 1919, în lumina corespondentei diplomatice a lui Ion I. C. Brătianu/The political and military activity of Romania in 1919, in the light of the diplomatic correspondence of Ion I. C. Brătianu*, "Cartea Românească" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1939, p. 86.

Ion I. C. Brătianu's correspondence sent from Paris to his mother and sisters are true history files, which is the reason why we are mentioning it selectively and briefly here, in the preamble of the diplomatic documents illustrating the dignity and patriotism of the great Romanian statesman.

*From the Paris Correspondence
of Ion I. C. Brătianu with His Family in Bucharest*

While at the Paris Peace Conference, in January-July 1919, Ion I. C. Brătianu vigorously defended the rights, recognition and sanctification by treaties of Greater Romania – as it had emerged from the sacrificial war of national-territorial integration and the unionist crosses from Chişinău, Chernivtsi and Alba Iulia.

From this point of view, the family correspondence from that tense period of time is a testimony.

The first letter was addressed to his mother, Pia Brătianu, on January 7/20, 1919, immediately after his arrival in Paris. We are reproducing, below, a revealing passage from the epistle: "Of course, I didn't arrive too early. I note with surprise, but not with regret, that among the difficulties are many springs from ignorance. I say without regret, because they are going to be overcome and I think I have already found a few solutions. Those who made my reputation of an impossible man here – did not want to serve me, but still did me some service, for I seemed less absurd than I had been described. After all, the issues of principle that I sat down on, all the important people I talked to were right. However, this does not imply that the problem is solved, on the contrary, I see greater difficulties ahead"².

As can be seen, the correspondence was eminently political and diplomatic in character, even though it was addressed to his venerable mother, but she was aware of all her son's work during the war, as it is now, during the Peace Conference.

One week later, Ion I. C. Brătianu sends his mother a new letter to Bucharest, expressing his mood, the difficulties he encountered, but especially his untranslatable longing. The correspondence is dated 28 January/10 February 1919, and from it I relate only two conclusive sentences: "I'm tired of being abroad, I'm worried and I miss my country; and the results here are such that they neither let me go, while I am not entirely happy to stay. Where there is goodwill, there is not enough character to achieve something determined and goodwill is not to be found everywhere"³.

During Ion I. C. Brătianu's stay at the Peace Conference, Queen Maria of Romania paid a visit to the Peace Areopagus in Paris. On March 7, 1919, Brătianu wrote to his sister Sabina in Bucharest, sharing his fugitive impressions: "The beauty of this woman [Queen Mary of Romania] is already appreciated. On the streets the crowds acclaim her. We wanted to establish a renaissance of heroism that I believe she deserves. She is going to be here until Tuesday, when she leaves for London"⁴.

The letter has an emotional ending, unveiling behind the mask of the "Sphinx" a loving man, a patriot caring for his fellowmen be them relatives or compatriots:

² Library of the Romanian Academy, Manuscript Room, Ion I. C. Brătianu Fund – S1 (207)/CCCLXIV.

³ *Ibidem*, S1 (208)/CCCLXIV.

⁴ *Ibidem*, S1 (206)/CCCLXVI.

“I am missing you and the country. I am fed up. So many times, I thought to take the train (and leave), but this cannot be”⁵.

One may notice that in the Manuscript Fund of Ion I. C. Brătianu from the Library of the Romanian Academy, the correspondence with the members of his family predominates, however, there are also letters addressed to the main political or diplomatic collaborators. For example, Brătianu sent a letter from Paris to interim Prime Minister Mihail Pherekyde in Bucharest, in which he expressed important considerations regarding the peace treaty imposed by the victors on Germany. Commenting on the draft treaty, Brătianu observed logically and reasonably, on May 7, 1919: “From what we know so far, peace is at once too harsh and too weak – for it imposes Napoleonic conditions and wants to execute them with Wilsonian means. It cuts off all the possibilities of economic expansion for a people of 80 million and against the exploitation caused by such compression provides instead of an iron belt, namely, the garlands of the League of Nations. Also, the issue of reparations is insufficiently resolved and, in their respect, the selfishness of the Great is fierce”⁶.

Quite the country, the affection of the daughters of his brother-in-law Barbu Știrbei, towards Ion I. C. Brătianu was well known, who, in turn, had similar feelings toward the nieces of his wife, Eliza Brătianu. It is therefore not surprising that Brătianu shared with Știrbei’s daughters – to whom he demanded discretion – different situations in which he took part during his stay at the Paris Peace Conference. For example, recounting in Bucharest sequences from the dinner given by Princess Murat, Brătianu narrated many parts from the conversations he entertained. Thus, when asked by the French Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon: “Well, is Romania satisfied?” Brătianu answered abruptly: “This is far too much; the executioner is making fun of the victim”.

Witnessing the dialogue, the Belgian delegate commented: “But you will still be a great power, while we will remain a small one”. Brătianu’s reply was full of wisdom: “Yes, we will become a great power, but I assure you that when we arrive, we will remember our way of talking about what we suffered before we became. We will make it so that the dean who was once a shepherd and who, in order not to be involved in bad practices towards the underprivileged, from time to time, we are to put on the old clothes in order to remember all that we endured in our youth living in this costume. I assure you that we will piously keep our low-power suit”. In the end, “everyone laughed, except Pichon, who is a good man and realized the absurdity of the procedures”⁷.

In the same letter, Brătianu recounted another sequence that took place during the Peace Conference. Namely the one in which Romania and the other interested countries concerned – Poland, Czechoslovakia, Serbia and Greece – had signed through their delegates a collective declaration requesting the knowledge of the conditions of peace before being handed over to the former enemy. About that collective initiative, Brătianu rightly observed: “The demand is so natural that it

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibidem*, S1 (207)/CCCLXVI.

⁷ *Ibidem*, S6/CCCLXIX.

is ridiculous. But that's how things go with those who represent the ideas of justice and the rights of small States"⁸.

On May 10/23, 1919, he also sent a letter to his sister Maria, noting that his state of mind was unchanged: "The days passed, long, but many, and the troubles remained the same. The biggest difficulties came from those who did not understand their own interests. You had to fight with them, instead having everyone helping each other. It is not worse than before, but no better, while the crisis deepens"⁹.

Unfortunately, in the meantime, the crisis was showing signs of worsening. Writing to his sister Pia in Bucharest, Brătianu predicted that the conflict would break out with the entry on the agenda of the two troubled treaties: the one with Austria and the one regarding the Statute of Nationalities: "The Great Ones have the air of making fun of everything that is not theirs ... All the misery starts again. Good or bad anyway, but it can't be good, the end is near"¹⁰.

New impressions from the Peace Conference, Brătianu entrusted, in Bucharest to his sister Tatiana, in the letter of May 24/June 6, 1919: "In my mind and soul, I lead a more and more difficult life now, and I'm spending my time, and words, entering from one conversation to another and from one reception to another. When I think that our situation is a little easier, the thing is that it gets more entangled on the part of the Great ones because they only consider the services you can bring them or the difficulties you imply. On a sort of Jewish logic, on what was yesterday you cannot get even part of what is worth"¹¹.

Regarding his confrontations with Georges Clemenceau, the President of the Conference, Brătianu wrote to his sister Tatiana the following: "When I arrived in Paris, I told Clemenceau, 'I was told that if I spoke openly, I would gain your esteem ... but it was added that I would lose my cause. I care about both, what do I have to do?' I was told the day before yesterday that I would have won the esteem of the finest old man, what more could I think of the cause? If it were a consolation, I would find that the unanimity of the French people understands the situation. At three o'clock in the week I had the opportunity to hear parliamentarians, engineers, high-ranking generals, diplomats, academics – all of them unanimous on the outcome of the Conference and on our attitude towards it. But this is not a consolation because the action of the Governments is exercised apart from any rooting capitalizing serious public opinions. From time to time only, violent effects of quasi-Bolshevik popular reactions get felt"¹².

Overwhelmed, eventually, Brătianu undoubtedly affirmed the strong ideas guiding the national cause of the Romanians: "For us, the only consolation remains the confidence of the effective forces that our Romanian people represent and which, after all, will manifest themselves above all the combinations of the moment"¹³.

The letter we are quoting is longer, but loaded with valuable information. For example, Brătianu reported on the luncheon to which he invited the heads of small states in central and southern Europe, after which he concluded: "My fear is

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*, S1 (95)/CCCLXIX.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, S1 (129)/CCCLXII.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, S1 (131)/CCCLXVIII.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

also theirs, but those who understand it better cannot, and those who can are incompetent. In any case, it is a great misfortune that they are confronting the independent States, the new-born ones that do not meet the conditions of independence and in which category falls also our country”¹⁴.

At the end of the epistle, [he wrote] the invariable: “I miss being in your midst”¹⁵.

The national creed of the experienced statesman, Ion I. C. Brătianu, is clear from another letter exchange, from Paris, sent to M. Pherekyde, on June 9, 1919: “My conviction is that we can in no way accept such conditions [stipulated in the Statute of Nationalities attached to the draft treaty with Austria]. We have inherited an independent country and, even to stretch its borders, we cannot sacrifice its independence. We have tried to refuse our accession without openly provoking the final conflict, but we cannot have any illusions; we are facing the resentments of the Jews and the appetites that rule behind Wilson”.

A new letter sent from Paris is to Sister Sabina; dated 30 May/12 June 1919 and it is referring to the seventh plenary session of the Conference; we reproduce it *in extenso*, as following: “Yesterday, I had the first and, probably, the last success! [...] Postponement does not mean victory. The great difficulties are approaching and we come into contact with the tendencies of the Great Powers to treat the little ones [the small States] worse than during the times when the great feudal lords treated vassals. The misfortune is that the big ones are cynical and the little one’s cowards. When you talk to someone in person agrees with you, but what good is that?”¹⁶.

Meanwhile, Romania was at war with Bela Kun’s Bolshevism in Hungary. The leaders of the Paris Peace Conference neglected the danger entailed by this “Bolshevik world revolution” to Europe and accused the Romanian Government of belligerent actions during the proceedings of the Peace Conference. Exasperated by the passivity of the Great Allies regarding the expansion of the “red plague”, Brătianu wrote to his sister Pia, on June 7/20, 1919: “Bela Kun’s [belligerent] response should also awaken the blind ones. But what to do with those baddies! We have to wait as long as we can. The forces of salvation are within borders, not with the Great”¹⁷.

We conclude this short journey in epistles’ exchanges with diplomatic connotations sent to members of his family in the country, with a significant excerpt from a letter addressed by Ion I. C. Brătianu to his son George: “The difficulties are great. Above all, much patience is required, and God knows whether in the state of the country this virtue is easy to manifest. Future generations will imagine that people could not be happier than us, the day after the victory, when in reality there were no greater responsibilities and no heavier task”¹⁸.

As following, we are publishing the texts of two transcripts of the plenary sessions of the Paris Peace Conference, on which occasions Ion I. C. Brătianu spoke about the draft peace treaty with Austria and the additional Statute of Nationalities.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, S1 (208)/CCCLXIV.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, S1 (130)/CCCLXII.

¹⁸ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *quoted work*, p. 58.

*A First and Last Success of Ion I. C. Brătianu
There are two brilliant appearances of Brătianu in front
of the leaders of the moment – Clemenceau and Wilson
– which remained as anthological pages
in the history book of the modern world.*

The seventh plenary meeting of the Conference

Thursday, 29 May 1919

Under the presidency of Mr Georges Clemenceau, the meeting opens at 15 p. m.

President Clemenceau: – The agenda includes the communication of the terms of the peace treaty with Austria to the Allied and Associated Powers. This formula is not entirely accurate, for today we will inform you about the conditions without the military clauses, which were postponed for later debate, because of the repercussions they may have on the States forming the Austrian-Hungary Kingdom, also without the reparation clauses, which were sent to the competent commission and, finally, without the political clauses affecting Italy. These three parts of the treaty will be submitted as soon as possible. Most of them are finished and will be brought to your attention, of course, before they are handed over to the Austrian plenipotentiaries.

Mr. Ion I. C. Brătianu (Romania): – I ask the President to allow me to ask him whether the information provided to us today is the full treaty, the detailed text of the articles or only a summary like the one read to us before the treaty was presented to the German plenipotentiaries?

President Clemenceau: – We will continue to do the same with Germany. I have in my hands the text of the clauses which will be given to the Austrians tomorrow; a text will be read before the Conference which, I think, is in fact very close to the text of the treaty¹⁹. As soon as this faithful summary has been adopted by the Conference, we will consider ourselves authorized to hand over the treaty to the Austrian representatives.

Mr Brătianu: – In this case, I would have a request to formulate.

President Clemenceau: – Mr. Brătianu has the floor.

Mr Brătianu: – On behalf of the Governments of Greece, Poland, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Czechoslovaks and Romania, I have the honour to ask the Conference to postpone the handing over of the treaty to the Austrians for 48 hours, so that we can take note of their text about the conditions that are to be imposed on Austria.

Our request is to know and examine these before adhering at them, because, as it happened as well with the text that was communicated to the Germans, in a verbal statement not everything could be clear enough. Even if now one would read these texts, we would need time for reflection to establish their consequences for each of our States. Therefore, in the name of these governments, I am asking the esteemed Chairman to be so kind to request the Conference to delay conveying

¹⁹ This text did not include the clause of minorities with reference to Romania.

the treaty to the Austrians, in order to gain us 48 hours to examine the text. If the text were handed over to us today, would have been a delay of only 24 hours; but if we receive it tomorrow, then we needed 48 hours more.

This text did not include the clause of minorities with reference to Romania.

President Clemenceau: – Is anyone taking the floor? As President of the Conference I consider that I am entitled to say that I find the request presented by Mr Brătianu entirely legitimate. Everyone would like to end this as soon as possible. The redaction committees, the committees of experts, are working day and night and they are speeding up things. We were hoping that before the present conference would have been possible to release the text required by Mr Brătianu, but there are not more than five or six copies until now, so we could not release it. This text is going to be distributed tonight around 18.00 or 19.00 to the interested Legations, after the assurance I was given. Mr Brătianu requests a timebreak of 48 hours. This way we could postpone for next Monday the remission of the treaty.

Mr Brătianu: – You are offering more than we have requested.

President Clemenceau: – This is true, you need time to consult and discuss this document. Kindly mind that in the case that you have observations, which are possible and even probable, bring them up to us in writing, as soon as possible, so we examine them among us and prepare solutions. This way we postpone the meeting of the Conference for Saturday, 15.00 hours and decide for Monday the remission of the treaty of St. Germain (Approval).

Mr Brătianu: – Mr President, I can only thank you, in the name of the Romanian government.

President Clemenceau: – There is no need for thanking me. It is a simple matter of justice. No one else wants to take the floor? The next meeting might be on Saturday 31 May at 15.00 hours. It is settled. (The meeting adjourns at 15.25)

Defence Has the Floor

The eighth plenary meeting of the Conference

Saturday, 31 May 1919

Under the presidency of Mr Georges Clemenceau, the meeting opens at 15.00 hours

President Clemenceau: – On the agenda we have the information of the Allied and Associated Powers in what concerns the terms of the Peace Treaty with Austria. Gentlemen, we have the honour to depose today on the desk of the Conference a document which is far more complete than that we could present the other day; now there are still missing only the political clauses concerning Italy, the military clauses and the clauses of the reparations, for which the redaction is advanced – so that in the following two or three days the document will be complete. At the request of Mr Brătianu and a number of heads of Government, the discussion started yesterday was postponed for today meeting, because these Gentlemen wanted to have the necessary time to read the clauses of the treaty

and study the observations or the amendments to be presented. The general secretariate of the Conference received a few amendments which I am going to submit right away to the attention of the Conference. The first place is taken by the observations of the Romanian delegations, which obviously can be resumed in formulae to be potentially included in the treaty. I give the floor to Mr Brătianu.

Mr Brătianu (Romania): – I shall repeat almost everything I have said in the propositions and declarations made in writing for the Conference.

President Clemenceau: – My request is to resume them, reading only the texts that you propose to replace certain passages in the text communicated.

Mr Brătianu: – I shall resume them as much as possible.

President Clemenceau: You have the total freedom to discuss. However, I must say that I have just received your text, three minutes ago.

Mr Brătianu: – We also had the text of the treaty only yesterday evening at six p.m. We did not have even 24 hours to examine it.

President Clemenceau: – I shall limit myself to explain the procedure I am proposing to be followed. Since we are going to be called to vote, I consider entirely necessary so that the Conference is informed.

Mr Brătianu: – Under these circumstances I shall read the articles proposed to be inserted into the treaty and also to the reasons which sustain the changing of these articles.

President Clemenceau: – Mr Brătianu has the floor.

Mr Brătianu: – The Romanian Delegation, receiving the partial text of the project of treaty with Austria yesterday, 30 May, at 06.00 pm, readily makes the accompanying declarations, included in the annexes A, B, C and D; Annex A “The Romanian Delegation considers that the conclusion of the peace with Austria does not leave any shadow of doubt on the reunion of Bukovina with Romania²⁰. Indeed, to Romania, which became through the alliance treaty from 17 August 1916 belligerent part against Austria, Bukovina approached the reunion, as a consequence of the unmaking of the kingdom of Austria and in agreement with the wishes of the population from Bukovina. This way, the integrality of the territory severed from Moldova, in 1775, is repaired”. Annex B “Concerning article 5 from part three, section four, for the project of the treaty with Austria²¹. including the treatment of minorities by Romania, the Romanian delegation has the honour to make the following declaration: The first Romanian delegate, at 27 May 1919 addressed the following letter to Mr Berthelot, the President of the commission entrusted with determining the nature of the guarantees that should be ensured for the protection of the minorities, embodied into the new States under a process of formation in Europa and into the other States which are going to receive territorial increments: Mr President, in answering to the letter kindly addressed to me at

²⁰ In the definitive text is article 60.

²¹ Here is the initial text of the treaty in this respect: “The High Contracting Parties recognize and accept the borders of Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, of the Serbian- Croatian-Slovan State and of the Czechoslovakian State, either as they are established, or as they are going to be established later and Austria renounces in the favour of the main Allied and Associated Powers all their rights and their titles over these territories that used to belong to it and which, although situated outside the new borders of Austria, now they are not attributed to no other State. Austria is bound to accept the arrangement that will intervene, in what regards these territories”.

23 May this year, I have the honour to communicate that Romania ensured the perfect equality of the political and religious rights and freedoms of all citizens without differentiation after ethnicity or belief. Romania considers as Romanian citizen any individual born in Romania and who is not a foreign subject, as well as all the inhabitants of the territories newly united with Romania, former subjects of the States to which these territories used to belong, besides those who are opting to another allegiance. In general, Romania is ready to receive all the dispositions that all the States which are members in the League of Nations decide to admit on their territory in this matter.

Under different conditions Romania could not in any event consent to the involvement of the foreign Government in the application of domestic laws. (...) Inspired from these principles, the delegations of Romania voted, at the occasion of the establishment of the League of Nations, the guarantees proposed for the States from the League of Nations; but outside the framework of these general principles, Romania cannot receive tasks that would limit its rights as a sovereign State and in this order of ideas, it considers that the rights of the States are the same for all States. Considering the interest itself which the founders of the Leagues of Nations must have to prevent any contradiction regarding the grand principles from which the League is inspired, the decisional members of this institution should avoid attitudes that are not identical toward all the States. In fact, a foreign intervention that anyhow would not provide a greater freedom than that of the Romanian State decided to guarantee for all its citizens, which could endanger the work of freedom which is the purpose of the Romanian government. On the one hand, certain minorities might consider themselves free from any feeling of gratitude toward the State which counts on the development of this feeling to strengthen the brotherhood among peoples; on the other hand, it may generate a current tending to generate two categories of citizens in the same Kingdom: some trusting the solicitude of the State, the others with resentments and ready to look for protectors outside the borders. The history shows that, seen from this point of view, the protection of the minorities contributed more to shaken the foundations of the States than to strengthen them. Now, the Conference of the Allies has to make the efforts to set the foundations (for its activity) on the basis of the brotherhood among people, the countries which development is meant to ensure the peace in Central and Meridional Europe. All these Allies, when we have received for debates the project for the institution of the League of Nations, rejected the article 21 that reads as following: 'The High Contracting Parts agree to declare that there is going to be no obstacle set for any religious belief or opinion that is not opposed to the public opinion and to the moeurs and that in their jurisdiction, no one should be impeded in his life or freedom or in his manner to search for freedom through this or that religious belief or opinion'. In the interest of freedom and justice for all, as well as in the interest of domestic development, Romania is decided to guarantee the rights of minorities. In the same interest Romania does not pretend for itself as an independent State exceptional treatment, but it cannot accept to endure a special regime to which other sovereign States are not constrained. For that reason, Romania is prepared to include in the project of treaty, at article 5, part III, section IV, the following text: 'Romania grants all

minorities of language, ethnicity and faith, living within its new borders, equal rights to those granted the other Romanian citizens” Annex C. In what concerns the second paragraph of the article.... “Romania declares that is ready to undertake all measures to ease the transit and develop the trade with other nations. Romania shall receive in this respect all the dispositions of general order that the League of Nations is to edit and that are going to be applicable to all the States that are part of this League, as well as to those decided in the special commissions of the Peace Conference that Romanian delegates are going to receive”. Annex D “Consenting to adhere to the stipulations included in the project of treaty with Austria under the reservations shown in the declarations attached –, Romania is inspired by the desire to maintain the solidarity with the Allies. However, giving this way its consent, Romania is forced to declare that it does not imply that it has to follow all the similar principles that may be included in the treaties with the enemy States”.

President Clemenceau: – You are requesting a supplement of information. I am entirely sure that you have the documents for 24 hours.

Mr Brătianu: – The treaty was communicated to us last evening.

President Clemenceau: – I apologize, but you had the elements of the treaty at the same time with us. This meeting exists. Today there is a Conference taking place. There is as well an authority at its desk, which has to consider the will of all the Powers. We do not have an intention to oppress you.

The Persuasion of President Clemenceau

President Clemenceau: – You are portraying a series of considerations, among which some, such as the financial clauses were not conveyed to me until now, so that we had no time to read them. Since we have the intention to resolve this matter today, not to postpone the second time the Austrians, I shall send this part to the Committee of redaction which is going to answer to you right away. You should understand well that the arguments that are brought to us we know. The delegation presented before you did nothing else than bring the texts which were deposited at the office. We shall examine them right away, again. In order to proceed in an organized manner, I am thus uniting the various matters that were proposed to the Conference by Mr Brătianu. I announce him in a public manner that, first, in what concerns the territories themselves, remains that regardless that it concerns the Society of Nations or the Governments; we cannot guarantee other territories than the parts of territory that we attributed ourselves, because we cannot guarantee others. In what concerns the rights of the minorities I am very happy to learn that Mr Brătianu thinks in this respect exactly as us. Question is whether because of the historical past of some people would not be necessary to give, say, not supplementary guarantees, but guarantees of a higher order, that might be recognized as necessary. This is a matter on which we have to decide and I am asking Mr Brătianu, as well as everyone else who has observations to go ahead and make them known so we may be absolutely certain that it is not about humiliating anyone, or infringe upon the sovereign rights of any nation, but that, however, the history of all people concerning the minorities is not exactly the same. There are necessary distinctions to be made in

this respect, so we do not want to humiliate anyone when we are proposing a right of control, not of foreign governments, as Mr Brătianu considers in his text, but of the Society of Nations, whose control we are all accepting under the conditions presented by Mr Brătianu. It cannot be thus, in this Conference, about humiliating anyone, or about infringing upon the sovereignty of any state...

Mr Brătianu: – I have something to say.

President Clemenceau: – Mr Brătianu has the floor.

Tense Oratorical Dialogue

Mr Brătianu: – We have never intended to doubt the affirmations made by the president; but your excellency should not doubt my good will when I am telling you that I have received the treaty yesterday evening at six o'clock and that I have had less than 24 hours to examine it and to present my propositions. In the summary sent to us before, the clause concerning Romania was not even included. Also, we are taking the liberty to point out to you the fact that a moment ago you referred to a text that was not communicated to us in the form that you mentioned. In the text provided to us the reference is not to the Society of Nations, but, as we have previously stated, about the Great Powers, who were to control the smaller States. Here there is the phrasing of the text: "Romania adheres as well to the insertion within a treaty with the main Allied and Associated Powers including to the dispositions these powers considered appropriate to protect in Romania the interests of the inhabitants etc..."

President Clemenceau: – It is not my place to judge the attitude of Romania... I admit thus that the observation made by Mr Brătianu about the protection through Governments, instead of that through the Society of Nations, is in conformity with the discussed text. Having said that, my observations remain and I do not think that it would be humiliating for Romania to receive advice from States such as the United States of America, Great Britain, Italy, or France. Mr Brătianu can rest assured that neither the United States, nor the Great Britain, nor France, nor Italy want to exercise an unfair power over Romania. I have said that only certain historical traditions have lasted in certain countries and that the rectifications based on such traditions were required a long time ago even in other treaties, which Mr Brătianu cannot not know, but that they could not have been obtained (so far). Under these circumstances, the text about which he is complaining, and about which the other Slavic States are not going to complain, represent more of an impulse and an aid. We would like to see that our friendly concurs is interpreted in the intended meaning and not in that he liked to assume.

Mr Brătianu: – In order to not waste the time of the Conference, we do not want to start a complete exposition of the past politics of Romania. We are nevertheless keen to express that Romania does not deserve the situation attempted to be imposed today here. Anyway, we find ourself – at least this is how we have always seen it – in front of the Conference of the Allied and Associated Powers which fought to set out, among other things, the right to equality of the Greater and smaller Stat and to institute rules to serve from now on as guiding principles

and precedents. Among these rules, we notice here one that tends to decide today different classes in what concerns the sovereignty of the States. In the name of Romania, I cannot receive this principle. We are not talking here about amicable advice, but about a contractual duty. Romanian government shall be always open to receive advice from its great friends. But certain pieces of advice inscribed into treaties under the form of distinct duties from Government to Government are losing this friendly character. History provides telling examples in this respect. Thus, the Russians intervened on the politics of Turkey to protect the Christians and the result for Turkey was no other than dismantlement. Namely, the play was nice, but it was not logical unless only for it had as ultimate purpose the independence of these peoples. With another purpose, is not possible, neither interest of the States, nor in that of the minorities, to accept a rule of this sort. As we have had the honour to state here previously, we want to contribute along with you to create a new world that will take the place of the old one. This new world should be designed in such a manner that the States can find in their citizens devoted sons and a brotherly life, in harmony. If the minorities know that the freedoms, they enjoy are guaranteed not by the solicitude of the State to which they are belonging, but by the protection of some foreign Government, the very foundation of the State is going to be shaken. At the very foundation of the new state of affairs that is emerging are placed ferments which are functioning in the opposite direction than that of the purpose declared by the Conference. Gentlemen, we have formulated these observations from the short exposition we have read in the name not only of the independence of the Romanian State, but also in the name of the two grand principles that this Conference represents, the first regarding the peace, order, fraternity among all the people of the same State, the other concerning the equality of all States, big and small, in what concerns their rights of interior legislation. Here is the reason why, in the name of Romania, we are asking not to be imposed any conditions that it would not admit.

President Clemenceau: – Allow us to ask if you agree with the proposition made by Mr Klotz.

Mr Brătianu: – Of course.

President Clemenceau: – We are sharing the opinion. As we said, the observations made by the honourable Mr Brătianu are going to be subjected again to the examination of the heads of Government. We are now passing to the requests of the Polish delegation.

From Pale Observation – to Serial Concessions

Mr Ignacy Jean Paderewsky (Poland): – Mr President, Poland presented in writing its observations on financial matters, but these matters must be accepted along with the clauses for reparations. We are renouncing to talk on this subject. However, in the name of the Polish Government, I am declaring that Poland shall give all ethnic, language and faith minorities the same rights as the majority conationals. It shall guarantee for these minorities the liberties granted by the great nations and Western States, it will be ready to enlarge these rights in the

sense in which the Society of Nations shall consider necessary to do for all its constitutive States. I am expressing our conviction that these guarantees, once inscribed by its Constituent Diet in the fundamental laws of Poland, will be in absolute conformity with the so noble and higher spirit that rules the grand purpose of the Peace Conference. That's all I had to say...

Mr Karel Kramer (Czechoslovakia): – In what concerns the minorities, I admit the text proposed, under the reserve of certain slight modifications. I am requesting the elimination of a couple of words that in my opinion are totally useless and that otherwise could occasion great nuisance, because our situation would be appreciated totally different from the manner in which Mr President wanted to show. We are ready to make everything for the minorities with the aim to have peace within our borders and we are happy to be able to approach these matters with the Great Powers. However, there are certain words that in my opinion are totally useless. I am reading: “Czechoslovakia admits to include in the treaty with the main Allied and Associated Powers all the measures considered necessary to protect in Czechoslovakia the interests of inhabitants that are different from the majority of the population by ethnicity, language or faith” ... I am requesting to be stroked out the words “considered necessary”, because we are going to conclude this treaty in a friendly manner. The resultant shall be the same.

President Clemenceau: – If you want to underline the words you want to eliminate and give me the text, I shall bring it to the knowledge of the Assembly.

Mr Karel Kramer: – I would have a few amendments to propose concerning the clauses that were proposed to us and which are difficult to be understood for the foreigners. Otherwise I would not insist on this point because the Committee of redaction shall want to examine this matter, as well as our amendments with all the goodwill with which we are accustomed. For instance, we want to give the Germans from Bohemia the right to opt for the Austrian nationality, while according to the proposed text, this would not be exactly possible. The other changes that we propose are similar and meant to clarify the text.

President Clemenceau: – Would the Committee of redaction be ready to make quickly a report?

Mr Fromageot: – The Commission had the honour to send to the Supreme Council a note in this respect.

President Clemenceau: – Very well.

Mr Kramer: – The financial clauses...

President Clemenceau: – We agree. Has the Serbian delegation any observations to present?

Mr Ante Trumbici (Yugoslavia): – The delegation of the Serbians, Slovenians and Croats had the honour to depose on the desk of the Conference proposals which aim to modify some clauses regarding the question of the minorities, the matter of the freedom of transit and commerce, the problem of the Western borders and the financial and economic clauses. In what concerns the financial and economic clauses, I am not going to get into the subject, considering the declarations made before I took the floor. In the question of minorities, however, I would have to make basically the same observations as Mr Kramer. We would

like to eliminate certain words from the official phrasing and say that the Serbian, Croatian and Slovan State engages itself to establish, in agreement with the main Allied and Associated Powers, the necessary dispositions to protect within the territories which were part of the old Austro – Hungarian Monarchy and were ceded through the present treaty “to the Serbian, Croatian and Slovan State, the interests of the minorities’ inhabitants. The difference between the two texts is obvious.

President Clemenceau: – This is the Serbian and Czechoslovakian vindication!

Mr Trumbici: – The Serbian vindication is identical to that of the Czechoslovakian State. I am providing, Mr President, the text of our new proposal. What we are requesting is that the main Powers to reason with us to set in mutual agreement these dispositions in a treaty. The second issue on which I would like to call your attention is the limitation of the future treaty to the territories that used to belong to Austro– Hungary.

President Clemenceau: – Are you talking about the text regarding minorities?

Mr Trumbici: – Yes.

President Clemenceau: – Are you suggesting limiting it to the new territories?

Mr Trumbici: – To those that used to belong once to the Austro – Hungarian Monarchy. The cause is obvious. Serbia was once an independent State. It has its earned rights. Nowadays it is not possible to impose to the territories of old Serbia clauses that could impede upon the right of sovereignty as State pre-existing the war. I am taking the liberty, Mr President, to present the exact redaction that we would like for you to receive.

President Clemenceau: – All right...

“I Am Asking My Friend Mr Brătianu...”

President of the USA, Thomas Woodrow Wilson: – I would regret it very much, for this meeting to have to adjourn leaving in the minds of some people the permanent impression, which I heard expressed here, about the Great Powers will to impose their overarching ruling to countries less considerable, by a feeling of authority and pride. I wish to call the attention upon an aspect of the regulation that we are working together. We want to ensure the peace of the world and make all the disturbing and dangerous elements disappear in the future. One of the basic conditions for this is the just division of land according to the affinities and the will of the populations. Once this is accomplished, the Allied and Associate Powers shall guarantee the maintaining of the as just as possible conditions upon which we have agreed. They should overtake the task and duty; on them is going to press the main responsibility, as they also supported the greatest effort of war, given the nature of things; and we should not forget that their power is the guarantee of the peace in the lands. Under these circumstances is therefore unjust that while we are talking to you not as dictators, but as advisers and friends, to tell you: “We cannot guarantee your borders if we do not believe that they observe certain principles of law”. The same reasoning applies to minorities. The same is the concern in whose virtue the settlement of the minorities was established.

If you want that the main Allied and Associate Powers to guarantee the being of the States, is it unfair to satisfy the asked conditions, so there is no possibility for further turmoil, conditions that these powers find indispensable to impede the future causes of war? We are asking our friends from Serbia and Romania to believe that we do not want tonight to infringe upon old and recognized rights of sovereignty; but the peace treaty is going to enlarge a lot the territories found under these rights of sovereignty. It is not possible to treat on the one hand the Serbian, Croatian and Slovene Kingdom as a unit resulted from the events to which we bore witness and on the other to keep the Serbian Kingdom as a State that is different in some respects. If these States are strongly established by the treaty we are creating together, the ones who are going in the last resort to guarantee its execution have the right to watch that, under the conditions in which these States will be definitively established to be able to ensure the peace of the lands. Our desire in this respect is not to intervene in a manner that might upset in the least these States, but to help them and to sustain our common cause. We are hoping that you would not doubt our point of view because we do not see other means to set this matter. How could the Government of the United States present itself in front of the Congress, in front of the American people, if they thought that the establishment decided might include instable and dangerous elements and still pretend it helped ensure the peace of the world? If the world is found troubled again, if the conditions accepted as fundamental are set in discussion again, the guarantee that was given to us means that the United States shall send over the Ocean their army and fleet²². Is it then surprising that under such conditions, so that to wish to act in such a manner that the solution for the different problems to be for them completely satisfying? I am going to tell especially to Mr Brătianu that we do not have the slightest desire to infringe upon the sovereignty of his country and we do not want to do anything that might be to his disliking. Romania is going to exit this War, greater, strong, with an increase of territory due to the common effort and the vigour of our armies. We have thus the right to insist on certain conditions that, after our opinion, are going to make this success definitive. I am asking my friend, Mr Brătianu, my friend Mr Kramer, my friend Mr Trumbici, to trust that if we mentioned in the article mentioned just now the Great Powers alone it is not because the latter want to impose their conditions, but only because they want to be sure that they can guarantee, with all the powers at their, all the benefices that this treaty provides to you, as well as it provides for us. We must work together and this togetherness cannot rely on anything else than an understanding. Having to leave the resolution of these matters to future negotiation, as proposed, would mean that when this Conference ended its works, separate groups would decide amongst themselves what in fact has to be part of the foundation of the world peace. This seems impossible. I am hoping to reach a common cordial work, freely, on the only foundation possible. This foundation we must express this way. This is going to be the source of power; this is going to guarantee the maintaining of peace. Decisively, only from force is going to emerge the supreme guarantee of

²² And the American Congress had made special reserved comments on this guarantee.

peace. We should not be mistaken here about the meaning we are going to the world force. The United States have never had any intention of aggression and you know the reason of their intervention in the affairs of the old continent. We are pursuing a common purpose and all that we want is to help you attain this purpose of mutual good understanding with us. We only want to be together with you, to serve you and we are not going to do anything against your true interests.

The Answer of the Irreducible Brătianu

Mr Ion I. C. Brătianu: – The exquisite personality of President Wilson gives all the words of his Excellency and all his pieces of advice an entirely special character of authority. I am taking the liberty that in the name of the great principles that the President himself has proclaimed to friendly call his attention upon the worry that some of the applications of the principles, made with the best intentions might somehow attain result which are contrary to the envisioned purpose. As I have said, we should be weary that from the works of this Conference result only intended and discuss consequences. It has accomplished a great work of justice, it established not only the guarantee and the express reservations of the American Congress over this guarantee against the enemy, but also the equality of the rights of all States, grand and small. If principles as those you want inscribed today in the treaty with Austria are to be stipulated in the Statute of the Society of Nations, we would not have been against it. Mr President Wilson should be so kind to remember that the Romanian delegation voted for these principles to be established once and for all. To handle things as they are handled with the current treaty means to establish different stages of sovereignty. With all the feelings of friendship and profound admiration that I have for the Italian people, I cannot conceive why, under identical conditions, countries such as Romania or Serbia should be treated differently than Italy. On the other hand, as I had the honour to clarify, the aim is to establish a brotherly life among the peoples that are forced to constitute into one State because their geographical situation. It would be a capital mistake to make that these relations of friendship to depend on a third party, whichever that may be. We should not lose sight of the fact that in the head of the Governments of the new current Powers are men inspired by the most noble principles, but it might happen so that through certain political developments the same States arrive to be represented by different people or that new interests emerge and determine certain Governments to deviate from their previous attitude, this way leading them to take actions conceived not in the favour of these grand principles, but in favour of certain special interests. It is certain that the Grand Powers, by their sacrifices ensured the victory of the grand common cause; but I am taking the liberty to add to the words pronounced by the President – and for which I am thanking him in the name of all the smaller States – when he said that the concerns of the grand political factors is already won to our benefit and that he want to guarantee the security of everyone, I shall add that the responsibility of each State for itself does not cease to be whole, regardless of its size, in what concerns its independence and security. Thus, at the moment,

Romania has to ensure with its own troops the defence not only of its borders, but also of a cause of concern for the whole centre of the Europe. As a consequence, even if the Great Powers have a greater role, according to their size, the responsibility and role of the independent States, no matter their size, are still theirs. I am asking the representatives of the Great Powers and in particular President Wilson, not to limit them (their independence) through a dangerous application of the great principles that are dear to us all. There is no effort to be done, for the rights of the minorities to be recognized. All the States now represented here are convinced by the necessity for the respect and development of these freedoms. Only let these States to develop under the only conditions that are allowing for the peaceful consolidation of the general political state of affairs that we have to constitute today. Animated by feelings which are both of respect and gratitude for the Great Powers and the services they have done, I am insistently asking them to examine, with all the interest related to such grand principles, the proposals and the declarations made by the Romanian Government; for it is necessary that these proposals to be admitted, otherwise Romania would not be able to maintain in its entirety the independence enjoyed in the past for the reglementations of its internal affairs.

Opportunistic Factors Without Stakes

Mr Elefterios Venizelos (Greece): – I am requesting the floor.

President Clemenceau: – Mr Venizelos has the floor.

Mr Venizelos: – I am taking the liberty to notice in a very respectful way, Mr President, that the clauses in question are not necessarily an integrant part of the treaty of peace with Austria. I would therefore like to suggest that, after leaving these clauses aside, you communicate only the rest of the peace terms with Austria on Monday and send these clauses to the examination of a special meeting of the Heads of the Five Great Powers, in addition to which should be summoned the Chiefs of Powers with limited interests, which are especially interested. There would thus be only ten people in total, who, around a table, would of course be able to find a means capable of satisfying the Great Powers and to calm the justified worries of the powers with limited interests. If you deem it necessary to incorporate these clauses in the peace treaty with Austria, we will have time, before the very signing of the treaty – because these clauses do not interest Austria – it is possible to formulate them and insert them in this treaty, in order to avoid drafting a special treaty in Austria concerning the powers with limited interests. Here's what I can suggest.

President Clemenceau: – Mr Venizelos' proposal will, of course, be examined together with those which have already been submitted to us. The agenda is over. Nobody asks for the floor anymore? ... The next meeting of the Conference will be on Monday at noon, June 2, at St. Germain – en – Laye. The meeting rises (meeting adjourned at 17.05)²³.

²³ The texts of the two stenography notes were reproduced from Stelian Neagoe, *Marea Unire a Românilor în izvoare narative/The Great Union of Romanians in the Narrative Resources*, Editura Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1984, pp. 619-633.

A Few Conclusive Comments

Ion I. C. Brătianu had signed, on behalf of Romania, the peace treaty with Germany, even if, I was saying, the problem of war reparations had not been completely solved. Voit somewhat suspended the claim of the entire Banat; like his father at the Congress of Berlin, 1878, he protested for history, declaring that he did not want to alienate Romanian souls. He also strongly resisted all pressures from the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference in the armed conflict with Hungary. When the signing of the treaty with Austria reached the agenda of the Peace Conference, Brătianu did not pawn the future of Greater Romania, refusing to sign an international act with unfair interference against Romania. Figuratively speaking, he slammed the doors of the Peace Conference and decided to return to the country, leaving in Paris Nicolae Mișu, Romania's second delegate to the Peace Conference.

Coincidentally or not, on the very day of leaving Paris, on July 2, 1919, the Supreme Council of the Four Powers, represented by the foreign ministers, summoned Brătianu to "a working meeting", where he would give a series of answers regarding "Romania's rights over Bessarabia". As for the blackmail attempt, the Romanian prime minister gave the right answers with irrefutable arguments, finding that a new, eastern one was added to the acute western dispute. In the diplomatic conflict arising from Romania's refusal to sign the peace treaty with Austria and the Statute of Nationalities, the correspondents of the important Western newspapers accredited to the Peace Conference agreed with the resistance opposed by Brătianu. Concerning the secrecy of the four Great Powers over the rest of the Allied and Associated States, the American publication *The Washington Post* described the chosen ways: "The process has nothing but a trap, a way to jump over allied peoples, to shut their mouths, to tie their hands and paralyze their will in the face of an arrangement that disposed of their destinies without their prior knowledge and consent"²⁴. In the English daily *The Times* we find the explanation for Brătianu's refusal to sign the two treaties concerning Romania's independence and sovereignty: "This attitude of the Great Powers has nothing to do with the Jewish question in Romania because by a law given in Bucharest, in December 1918, Jews they received all the privileges of Romanian citizenship"²⁵. Finally, the American newspaper *The New York Times* stated clearly: "Romania was asked to sign a treaty that contains clauses incompatible with the dignity of an independent country. This constitutes a blatant contradiction to the principles for which World War II was fought"²⁶.

Otherwise, Ion I. C. Brătianu tried his best not to affect Romania in its existence as an independent and sovereign state, by signing treaties that harmed the country's vital interests. At some point, he confessed to his relatives the dilemma he had encountered at the Peace Conference: "I was on the verge of protesting several times, returning to Romania and resigning. An excess of debt consciousness imposed

²⁴ *The Washington Post*, August 12, 1919.

²⁵ *The Times*, August 29, 1919.

²⁶ Cf. *The New York Times*, August 7, 1919.

on me the obligation to endure everything, as long as there will be a hope to end this situation”²⁷. Disappointed and affected by the ingratitude of the Supreme Council, Brătianu was forced to make the last gesture of protest against injustice. At the departure, he motivated the journalists’ irrevocable attitude: “For any State, but especially for one like ours, to leave the territory of principles is already to give up, because the principles alone give us the necessary compensation in international life in front of the Great [powers]”²⁸. He also told the foreign journalists accredited to the Paris Peace Conference when they left for the country: “I am forced to leave power, not because of the problems of Banat and Bessarabia, which are still unresolved issues. This should happen because I am convinced that Romania will not be able to accept the clauses regarding minorities, which will limit sovereignty and which will be introduced in the peace treaty with Austria”²⁹.

Immediately after arriving in Bucharest, Ion I. C. Brătianu hurried to send a letter with testamentary value to his son Gheorghe (George) Brătianu, who was in Paris for university studies: “Don’t give up on History. You start and meanwhile I am hoping to finalize the attempt. Maybe there will be a time when we can work together. For now, if History is made in Paris, I can tell you that, contrary to what has been said on this subject, it is better to write than to make History. How many bastards I’ve seen here, I wouldn’t have believed. Finally, a result obtained that, when the Germans arrived at Versailles [to sign the peace treaty], the Italians left for Rome. The film is quite beautiful”³⁰. After 20 years from the Paris Peace Conference, 1919, the historian Gheorghe I. Brătianu dedicated a work to the diplomatic activity of his father Ion I. C. Brătianu. The title of the publication is completely explicit – *The political and military activity of Romania in 1919 in the light of the diplomatic correspondence of Ion I. C. Brătianu*. The quintessence of that paper consists in the concluding paragraphs, from which we reproduce these profound value judgments: “Formally, the first delegate of Romania had been defeated by the formidable coalition of ambitions and interests he had faced. The victory lasted only a moment; Brătianu’s anger, defeated at the Peace Conference, is the surest basis and the indisputable historical testimony of Romania’s international position today. Indeed, when, after Munich, in October 1938, President [France] Daladier declared that, in the event of a victorious war, he still could not maintain the borders of Czechoslovakia, Brătianu did not have a prophetic intuition in 1919 when he considered it necessary to present ourselves not as a creation of a diplomatic act, reviewable and revised, but as a living expression of unfulfilled national aspirations, to which the treaty was no longer, on our part, a supreme concession to the peace and tranquillity of Europe?”³¹

From July until the first decade of September 1919, the Government of Ion I. C. Brătianu resisted the injunction of the elders at the Paris Peace Conference.

²⁷ Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *quoted work*, p. 58.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 97-98.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

He ignored pressure from the Supreme Council – impassive of the extent of Bolshevism's spread – saving Hungary and neighbouring countries from the danger of Lenin's Kun – Kun world revolution. He was not intimidated by threats of severe sanctions if he did not sign the peace treaty with Austria. And yet...

On September 10, 1919, the Allied and Associated Powers signed the peace treaty with Austria at Saint Germain, ordering Romania to do the same. In such a last moment, considering that the Great Powers decided to impose on Romania conditions that it cannot accept because they are "incompatible with its dignity, independence and political and economic interests" – the Government of Ion I. C. Brătianu resigned. After an unsuccessful attempt to establish a national government of parliamentary elections, a government was reached consisting of the military and technicians – also for the organization of parliamentary elections – chaired by General Arthur Văitoianu. As the Văitoianu Government, having a limited mandate – to organize and conduct parliamentary elections under the auspices of the universal suffrage – it declined responsibility for signing the peace treaty with Austria.

Following the electoral elections of November 2 – 9, 1919, as none of the political parties obtained the majority of votes cast, a coalition of political formations was formed, called the Parliamentary Bloc. This emanated the Collaborative Government chaired by the Romanian Transylvanian leader Alexandru Vaida voivod. The main mission of the new Ministerial Cabinet was fulfilled on December 10, 1919, when Romania signed the peace treaty with Austria, and implicitly the Statute of Nationalities. As for Ion I. C. Brătianu, he understood that the failure of the National Liberal Party in the parliamentary elections was due to the erosion of the War Government for the national – territorial integration of Romania. While he was in the opposition, Ion I. C. Brătianu waited for the more favourable circumstances of smoother diplomatic relations abroad, and inside the dissolution of the *sui generis* Parliamentary Bloc, he removed the Bolshevik communist danger – which threatened the order, security and even the existence of Greater Romania – provided the "bad weather cloak" of the salutary victory from Mărăști, General Alexandru Averescu. After contributing decisively to the political compromise of his whimsical political opponent Take Ionescu, Brătianu decided to ask the Sovereign and obtained the approval of the Government that in the legitimate 4-year term (1922-1926) structurally founded Greater Romania. Finally, he solved the delicate dynastic crisis, by abdicating the Crown Prince Carol and establishing the Regent – guardianship of the minor King Michael. After all these achievements after the well – known poetic licence, that is, tired of what he had accomplished, "he went to die a little", in the crypt of the familial eternal place at Florica.

Finally, with reference to Brătianu's omnipotent opponent, over the years, the "Tiger", as the former president of the Paris Peace Conference, Georges Clemenceau, was called – observing with resigned sadness that the peace system imposed by the Big Four in 1919 had not been a success, quite the contrary – he had completely and diametrically changed opinions regarding the personality of the Romanian prime minister. We have, in this sense, the testimony of I. G. Duca:

“When I saw Clemenceau a few years after the Conference, he, who in 1919 had been the fiercest against Brătianu, confessed to me without hesitation that, although he clashed with him, he is the one to whom he must show all his admiration for the tenacity with which he understood to defend the rights of his country”. He even added: “I often wonder if he is not the one who was right and we who were wrong”³². In the same vein, the French ambassador to Romania during the War and Peace of 1916-1920, Count Saint – Aulaire had – in his Memoirs – words of high esteem to Ion I. C. Brătianu, compared to the “dictators” who resettled with many distortions post – war Europe: “The near future has revealed to me the highest qualities that make him one of the great statesmen of his generation, far superior to the three great ones: Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau. Nothing more natural: in small countries, great people”³³.

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³² I. G. Duca, *Memoirs*, vol. II, Stelian Neagoe edition, Machiavelli/ISPRI Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015, p. 504.

³³ Saint-Aulaire, *Confessions of an old diplomat*, Flammarion Publishing House, Paris, 1953, p. 340.