

THE POLISH GOLD AT THE NATIONAL BANK OF ROMANIA (1939–1947)

CRISTIAN PĂUNESCU¹
MIHAELA TONE²

The state of neutrality Romania declared at the outbreak of World War II did not prevent our country from allowing military supplies heading for Poland, as well as many refugees (political figures, military, civilians) to cross the Romanian territory, despite the Germans' vigorous protests. On 9 September 1939, the Polish government took the decision of rescuing the treasure of Bank Polski by shipping it to Romania and thereafter to a region remote from the Nazi menace. The next day, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs instructed Poland's Ambassador to Romania on getting the approval for crossing the Romanian territory from the Romanian government. With this aim in view, E.F. Kwiatkowski, the Polish deputy Prime-Minister and the Minister of the Treasury, left for Bucharest. The Romanian authorities gave their nod, without any claim, for the safe passage of the Polish treasure and made available the necessary logistics.

On the night of 17/18 September, the Polish government, officers and soldiers alike, as well as other officials crossed the Polish-Romanian border. Within this group were also Ignacy Moscicki, the President of the Republic, Marshall Rydz-Smigly and Jozef Beck, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Accommodation for the President of the Polish Republic, together with Marshall Rydz-Smigly, was provided at the Royal Palace in Biczaz and thereafter at Mikhail Palace in Craiova. On 25 December 1939, the Polish President left Romania with the support of the Romanian authorities and chose to reside in Switzerland. The Minister of Foreign Affairs resided for a while at Băile Herculane, together with Slawoj Skladkowski, the former Prime-Minister, who headed for Turkey on 22 June 1940.

By accepting Polish refugees on its territory, in spite of repeated protests from Germany, Romania displayed its humanitarian and hospitable spirit. In this vein, the Romanian government founded "The General Commissariat for Recording and Assisting Polish Refugees" on 27 September 1939. This body was in operation until May 1944, when it turned to a sub-secretariat of state, and was dissolved in 1945.

¹ Director, Human Resources Department, NBR.

² Head of Archives Museum Division, NBR.

In September 1939, the **gold reserves of Bank Polski** worth about US\$ 87 million entered Romania in a special train. The Romanian authorities ensured the safe passage of that train throughout the country, under military escort, to the harbour of Constanța, from where the trainload was uploaded on “Eocene”, a British oil tanker having a deadweight tonnage of 4,000 tonnes, which immediately set sail towards Istanbul. This was only the first in a series of adventurous events involving the treasure of Bank Polski, which came to an end once World War II was over and the gold returned to its country of origin.

On 17 September 1939, the treasure-trove of Krakow-based “Wawel” Museum, along with valuables belonging to the Royal Castle in Warsaw, was shipped to Romania for being rescued. The treasure encompassed inestimable valuables that belonged to the kings of Poland: the sword from the coronation of King Wladislaw Loketek, the thick necklace made of gold and enamel that belonged to Sigismund III, the paraphernalia of Jan III Sobieski, the knightly mantle of “Holy Ghost” Order sent by Louis XIV after the siege of Vienna, the hallowed sword bestowed upon the Polish king at Jaworow by the papal nuncio, Turkish flags captured during the siege of Vienna, a gold crown of 1792, the tapestry collection of Sigismund II Augustus.

After crossing the border, the treasure was hosted in Bucharest until November 1939. It was shipped subsequently to Constanța, uploaded on “Ardealul” vessel and sent to Marseille in January 1940 and finally to Aubusson. It is here that the treasure is enriched with the most precious handwritings of the Polish National Library. Among such valuables counted: a copy of the famous chronicle of Gall the Anonymous dating back to the 14th century, the homiliaries from the Sacred Cross (the oldest evidence of Polish prose written in the 13th century and copied in the 16th century), the psalm book of Queen Jadwiga worded in three languages, namely Polish, German and Latin, adorned with miniatures, dating back to the 13th century, the Bible of Gutenberg (1453–55) – one of the forty-five copies –, and forty-nine manuscripts by Chopin.

After Germany attacked France, the treasure was shipped to Bordeaux, then to Falmouth and further to London. From the British capital city, the Polish vessel “Bathory” carried the treasure to Canada, where it was kept until the war was over. After lengthy procedures, the treasure returned to Poland in three successive stages, as follows: 1948, 1959, and January 1961.

The National Defence Fund (comprising receipts from selling state-owned property, funds allotted by law, presents and offerings from Polish citizens to defend the state) was made up of silver goods, jewels, and other valuables shipped to Romania in order to escape German occupation. This treasure, alongside fifty-one trunks containing gold ingots belonging to Bank Polski, was sheltered at Chernovtsy, in a barrack of the Romanian gendarmerie, and was subsequently secretly shipped to Bucharest.

The National Defence Fund was uploaded on the Romanian vessel "Suceava" and deposited in Marseille on 14 February.

On 10 October 1939, the members of the Bank Polski delegation entrusted the delegates of the National Bank of Romania for safekeeping fifty-one wooden chests weighing a total of 3,057.450 kilograms. According to the statements of Polish delegates, the boxes contained 2,734.104 fine gold in ingots.

The containers used for carrying the ingots were improperly referred to as "boxes" in the delivery-reception protocol, since they were in fact fir-tree wooden coffers. The delivery-reception protocol was signed, on behalf of the National Bank of Romania, by Paul Gheorghe Răzuş, head cashier, and Alexandru Dumitrescu, general auditor, and, on behalf of Bank Polski, by Henryk Mikołajczyk, bank teller, and Viktor Styburski, deputy director at Bank Polski in Warsaw.

Recent research actions at the National Archives of Romania resulted in finding the original documents that attest the delivery-reception of the fifty-one coffers containing gold ingots. The table below sets out the coffers by weight.

"Box No.	Kg	Box No.	Kg.
372	59.400	981	67.200
368	59.150	982	67.350
376	59.500	481	54.150
988	66.200	378	59.600
457	74.550	393	60.100
352	59.400	478	54.000
455	63.200	416	59.800
980	67.400	375	59.500
1,001	67.200	413	59.900
987	66.600	374	59.300
354	59.450	347	59.500
396	59.400	440	59.450
349	59.150	499	54.100
474	55.700	463	50.100
357	59.750	379	59.550
364	59.450	371	59.250
429	59.700	432	59.500
425	60.000	452	61.250
986	66.800	363	59.500
480	54.050	498	54.550
381	59.850	449	61.700
333	43.800	460	61.650
996	67.300	493	54.400
369	59.400	978	54.800
983	67.450		

Posting: 1,583.900

Total: 3,057.450"

Every coffer was sealed with four wax seals, two of the National Bank of Romania and two of the Bank Polski, and afterwards weighed in front of both commissions. The "boxes" were deposited in the treasury vault of the NBR, in the basement of Marmorosch-Blank Bank. They formed a deposit that was binding upon the debtor **to return the received good, not to return a good of the same type and quality**. This was due to the fact that seals were applied onto the "boxes" entrusted to the National Bank of Romania, which left their content unchecked. The deposit made in Romania was subject to the laws of Romania.

On 2 May 1940, the NBR is presented a letter dated 20 April 1940 whereby Bank Polski, whose head office was relocated to Paris, required that the gold-containing "boxes" be handed over to Dorsey Stephen, the Bucharest representative of New York-based "Polish Food Commission Inc.". The letter mentioned that the gold was assigned to the aforesaid association aiming at providing assistance to the Polish citizens living under German occupation.

However, the Romanian government decided, according to Journal of the Council of Ministers No. 1,048 of 6 May 1940 to block at the National Bank of Romania the gold amount and to retain it as a pledge for the repayment of the debt owed by the Polish government to the Romanian government.

The debt of the Polish government covered the expenses incurred by the Romanian state in relation to Polish refugees, either civilians or military, and their equipment, as well as the total amount of zlotys the National Bank of Romania bought from those refugees at the exchange rate of 1 zloty for 20 leu.

Indeed, from 9 September 1939 to 24 April 1940, the Romanian state incurred the following costs: leu 491,108,268 for the refugees' upkeep; leu 1,000,000 for the refugees' upkeep (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs); leu 16,300,000 for the materials' maintenance; leu 28,000,000 paid by the Romanian Railways (for carrying the people and refugees' supplies); leu 240,163,877, equivalent to 12,013,585 zlotys bought by the National Bank of Romania. All this amounted to a total of leu 776,572,145.

As Bank Polski had received no reply to its letter, on 12 May 1940 it sent another request making the National Bank of Romania mindful of the responsibilities devolving upon it in case the former would find itself at a loss as a result of the deposit remaining blocked.

In response, the National Bank of Romania informed the Bank Polski on 29 May 1940 that it cannot fulfil the orders contained in the letter dated 18 May 1940 because of the interdiction imposed by the Journal of the Council of Ministers of 6 May 1940, and enclosed a copy of that document.

Meanwhile, on 19 May 1940, the minister of Germany in Bucharest submitted Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs a "Verbal Note" in which he protested against any action aimed at this deposit without the consent of the Reich that meanwhile announced its rights on the deposit.

Further requests for releasing the entire amount of gold were made by the Polish Embassy, through its memo of 5 June 1940, Bank Polski, in the letter dated 5 June 1940, Dorsey Stevens, in his note dated 31 May 1940, and Herbert Hoover, President of "Polish Food Commission Inc.", in a telegram sent on 11 June 1940. The requests were based on the following grounds: 1. until the Romanian government issued the Order of 6 May 1940, the gold entrusted to the National Bank of Romania by Bank Polski was an unencumbered deposit; 2. Bank Polski is a joint-stock company with legal personality, whose assets cannot be identified with those of the Polish government. Retaining its assets, in order to pay for the potential debt owed by the Polish government to the Romanian government, is at odds with the generally-acknowledged legal principles; 3. the gold was unconditionally surrendered to "Polish Food Commission Inc." prior to the Order issued by the Romanian government, hence the blocking affects an asset owned by an American legal entity; 4. the legal matters regarding the expenses incurred by the Romanian government in assisting Polish refugees will be governed by the provisions of a regulation to be issued in due course.

"As a warranty for such expenses could serve, in case the Romanian government deems it necessary, the Polish war materials, of which part is already used by the Romanian military, evaluated at 100 million zlotys by the Polish party. The value in exchange of these materials should cover the expenses of the Romanian government, and an additional warranty would therefore be unnecessary.

Against these complaints, the matter in its entirety was submitted to the Legal Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that reached the following conclusions: 1. blocking the gold deposited by Bank Polski with the National Bank of Romania is a deed destitute of legal grounds. The Romanian government could not coerce the National Bank of Romania, in a unilateral manner, to retain the gold for its own purposes, as a warranty, the more so as the Romanian government's claim on the Polish government has not yet been recovered and, for its repayment, the Romanian government holds a significant quantity of Polish materials; 2. the German government's request of surrendering the gold deposited by Bank Polski has no legal ground. The German Reich, in its capacity as occupant of the Polish territory, is entitled to exercise a supervision right over the gold of Bank Polski meant to ensure fiduciary circulation in the occupied territory and to ask the gold not to be returned to Bank Polski prior to signing an agreement between the occupant countries, including the USSR, and the legal managers of Bank Polski; 3. the entire matter of returning the deposit concerns primarily the National Bank of Romania, which is solely accountable for a wrongful return".

Following this notification, the Romanian government, via the Journal of the Council of Ministers No. 1,971 of 8 August 1940 altered the previous issue (No. 1,048 of 6 May 1940) as follows:

"The National Bank of Romania shall, until further notice, retain the gold deposit made by Bank Polski".

Consequently, "the Romanian government, finding that the gold deposited by Bank Polski with the National Bank of Romania has been claimed by both Bank Polski and the Reich, in its capacity as occupant of part of the Polish territory, deems that the right to claiming this gold amount is even now under litigation.

Considering that by fulfilling the request of Bank Polski the Romanian state would be exposed to claims by some foreign powers, the Romanian government deemed it necessary to take the appropriate measures for the National Bank of Romania to block the gold, irrespectively of exercising any retention right by the Romanian state".

The storage of boxes with the gold ingots at the National Bank of Romania followed by the request of its being re-conveyed to another entity than the depositor gave rise to incredible legal and diplomatic entanglements. This state-of-affairs lingered on until September 1947, when the gold-containing boxes were airborne by Polish planes to Warsaw. Right after the Polish gold was deposited at Bucharest, the German side put further diplomatic pressure onto the Romanian government. In a "Verbal Note" dated 19 May 1940, the German legation protested against the decision of the Council of Ministers published in Official Gazette No. 105 of 8 May 1940 that stipulated the retention by the National Bank of Romania, until further notice, of the gold deposit made by Bank Polski. The German legation announced Germany's right on the deposit, adding that the Reich's consent was required in making any decision.

On 22 July 1940, a notification from the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed by Mihail Manoilescu addressing Mitiță Constantinescu, the National Bank of Romania Governor, left the Romanian central bank solely accountable for the intricate matter relating to the deposit of Polish gold mentioning the following:

"On the other hand, the issue of returning the deposited gold concerns primarily the National Bank of Romania, which is solely accountable for a wrongful return of the deposit".

Meanwhile, the New York-based "Polish Food Commission Inc." opened legal proceedings against the National Bank of Romania, which had failed to convey the gold to this entity.

Following a negative response from the National Bank of Romania, a US court of law ordered a ban on amounts totalling US\$ 4 million in deposits with American banks, as follows: US\$ 2,220,955.20 with The Chase National Bank of New York; US\$ 1,105,241.81 with The National Bank of the City of New York; US\$ 673,802.89 (all deposits) with Irving Trust Co. in New York. The amount in these deposits reached a total of US\$ 3,999,999.90.

The said amount was under seizure in exchange of US\$ 3,060,704, representing the equivalent of 2,738,104.25 kg of gold, as well as a margin of US\$ 939,296 to cover a 6 per cent interest running as of 1 May 1940.

During the proceedings, on 10 February 1941, Mitiță Constantinescu, former NBR Governor and Minister of Finance, declared under oath before the authorised representative of the USA that:

“In October 1939, in my capacity as Minister of Finance, I found, on the one hand, that the National Bank of Romania became a direct creditor of Bank Polski for the amount of 240,163,877 leu arising from the conversion of 12,113,585 Polish zlotys in banknotes issued by the Bank Polski and, on the other hand, I realised that the manner to repay the claim of the National Bank of Romania, as provided by the Polish government in Notification No. 21/R.2/11 September 1939 sent by Polish Ambassador, had become ineffective after the Polish territory fell under foreign occupation.

In my capacity as both Minister of Finance and the NBR Governor, I was aware that Bank Polski had left 2,737,100 kg of fine gold in Romania in a deposit with the National Bank of Romania.

I hereby declare that both the government and the National Bank of Romania comprehended from the beginning that by making the aforesaid deposit the NBR shall have a safer warranty for retrieving its claims on Bank Polski”.

On 2 February 1941, one week before Mitiță Constantinescu made his deposition, Alexandru Ottulescu, the NBR Governor, had sent a telegram to Brutus Coste, *ad interim chargé d'affaires* at the Legation of Romania in Washington D.C., giving him some technical specifications necessary for the legal proceedings with “Polish Food Commission Inc.”:

“The NBR’s claim in amount of leu 240 million arises from the purchase of Bank Polski’s banknotes at the exchange rate of 20 leu per one zloty, based on the arrangement made with the Polish government by the agency of the Embassy of Poland in Bucharest, **at the latter’s firm requests**, in order to provide means of existence to Polish refugees.

The NBR was not in the least interested in conducting such an operation, as the zloty had no exchange rate, and the right devolving on us by the aforementioned arrangement, i.e. to use zlotys for paying off debts in Poland and introduce them into the country, by derogation from the laws in force, was only an illusion in the wake of the collapse of the Polish state.

For this reason, Bank Polski, subsequent to this arrangement (10 October 1939), agreed to deposit with the NBR the 51 gold-containing boxes, thereby ratifying the arrangement in its entirety.

Hence, the NBR’s claim on Bank Polski arises from the conversion and holding of banknotes corroborated by the arrangement dated 11 September 1939, which gives the NBR the right to convert the notes.

Given that now Bank Polski is no longer performing its activity normally, the NBR’s right to conversion cannot be exercised otherwise than by retaining the gold in order to perform the potential liquidation operations.

The Romanian body of laws acknowledges the retention right only in particular cases, the same as the French laws. Jurisprudence proceeded with an extension of the retention right in all cases where there is a connection between the retained object and the debt for which the retention is made. In this particular case, the connection is the result of the manner in which the gold deposit was made, as explained above.”

While the intricate, lengthy legal proceedings were unfolding at the Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Kings, the events on the war theatre took a turn for the worse, as the offensive of Soviet troops on the Eastern front spearheaded an impending invasion.

Given the circumstances, even Romania's gold treasure deposited with the National Bank of Romania was in danger. The gold could be captured by German troops as they pulled out of Romania or by the incoming Russian troops. Consequently, the government, together with the National Bank of Romania, decided to move the treasure to Tismana, in the mountainous region of Gorj County.

On 11 July 1944, the Ministry of Finance apprised Constantin Angelescu, the then NBR Governor, about the fact that permission was officially granted to the central bank for relocating its stock of gold to Tismana Monastery.

The National Bank of Romania had, in cooperation with the government, explored a number of avenues to rescue the treasure by sending it to Switzerland or Turkey. The Romanian central bank's representatives held talks with the officials of those countries but in the end the authorities settled on Tismana.

In this regard, some 4,074 boxes weighing 190,969,197.56 kilograms, along with the 51 cases containing the Polish gold, were sent to Tismana Monastery in utmost secrecy. Here, the containers were stored in a cave whose entry was walled in. The first part of this endeavour, referred to as “Operation Neptune”, ended successfully. When the war was over, the National Bank of Romania's treasure and the Polish gold were back safe and sound to Bucharest no early than February 1947. The lesson of WWI, when Romania's treasure was sent to Moscow, was learned and things went off smoothly. The gold could have been captured by German troops when they pulled out of Romania or by the Russian troops in offensive that could have considered it among the spoils of war and commandeer it. The return to Bucharest marked the successful completion of the second part of “Operation Neptune”.

On 23 May 1947, the National Bank of Romania Board debated Protocol No. 11/1947 of the bank's Legal Council on the Polish gold. Following Letter No. 718/1947 by the Legation of Romania in Washington D.C. sent “to the National Bank of Romania Governor, along with the letter from Davis Polk Law Firm and its memo, all regarding the same topic, i.e. the Polish gold, the Legal Council again examined this issue and, in light of the recommendations made by our lawyers, in the capacity as claimant in the lawsuit held in New York, with regard to the seizure of US\$-denominated assets of Romania in the USA found the following:

Considering that the National Bank of Romania acknowledges the deposit – made on 10 October 1939 – is available to its undisputable owner, the lawyers of Commission for Polish Relief Ltd., we propose to pay off the debt by resorting to the following procedure, also recommended by our lawyers:

- a) the National Bank of Romania to commit the deposit to Bank Polski; and
- b) therefore, the New York lawsuit should be terminated and the seizure cancelled.

Prior to this, we are requested to reach an agreement with Bank Polski on:

- a) the manner in which the contents of the boxes should be checked;
- b) the manner in which the deposit should be sent to Warsaw;
- c) the printed form of the discharge receipt that Bank Polski should remit the National Bank of Romania upon receiving the deposit;
- d) the printed forms of letters by the Polish Ministry of Finance and the National Bank of Poland, the first post-war central bank, to the National Bank of Romania whereby the aforementioned institutions agree to commit the boxes to Bank Polski;
- e) as a consequence of the agreement, the Bank Polski and the National Bank of Romania should send telegrams to their lawyers in New York to instruct them to make the necessary ‘arrangements’ to complete the lawsuit and obtain the ensuing discharge from Polish Food Commission Inc. and Commission for Polish Relief Ltd.;
- f) after making the said arrangements, our lawyers shall notify the Bank Polski and the National Bank of Romania on the progress made;
- g) hence, the Bank Polski and the National Bank of Romania shall notify their lawyers thereabout and request them to proceed with the termination of the lawsuit and the cancellation of the seizure.

The letter dated 19 April 1947 and sent by Davis Polk law firm shows that the lawyers of the Polish committee have the means to provide the following documents for establishing the ownership document for the deposit.

The exchange of letters between the National Bank of Romania and the Legation of Romania in Washington D.C. carries on and the bank’s Legal Council is seeking, together with the bank’s lawyers in New York, an avenue to reach an agreement.”

In the meantime, after being informed about the memo of the Agreements Division, the National Bank of Romania executives “ordered that, during the talks between the Romanian and the Polish parties on the enforcement of some provisions in the Peace Treaty, a sub-commission should also examine the issue of the Polish gold, as requested by the chairman of the Polish delegation and approved by the chairman of the Romanian delegation.

After looking at the proposals made by the Polish Committee, the Legal Council found that:

1. The proposal to settle the dispute via reaching an agreement is not only acceptable, but also desirable, and had been suggested by the National Bank of Romania in its previous notifications and letters sent to New York.
2. The procedure to be initiated by the Polish party is more intricate and lengthier than that envisaged by us, consisting either in an intervention of Bank Polski in a court of law in New York to settle a *res judicate* authority and make it opposable to us, as a party in the litigation, or in a direct agreement between the claimant, the Polish Support Committee, and Bank Polski, to which it should surrender the right of ownership on the deposit. This would of course not exonerate Bank Polski from producing the other letters which should testify that all parties targeted by us have no claims on the deposit and agree to its being handed over to Bank Polski.

With regard to the Polish proposals, the Legal Council raised the following objections:

- a) the proposal to check the contents of the boxes is deemed as unacceptable, since they were not received by the National Bank of Romania as a deposit accompanied by a note attesting their contents;
- b) the possibility of talks regarding the shipping is ruled out, as the deposit was made in Bucharest, from where it should be collected by the depositor or his proxy. Bank Polski shall be the only entity in charge with shipping the deposit;
- c) as for the procedure to be followed in reaching the agreement, the Council is of the opinion that the National Bank of Romania should get valid preliminary discharges from all the parties that could claim the deposit, as follows:
 1. Bank Polski, which made the deposit in 1939 (the notification on assigning the right on the deposit to the Polish Food Commission would suffice);
 2. the Polish Food Commission, to whom Bank Polski surrendered the deposit;
 3. the Commission for Polish Relief, showing that it did not transfer meanwhile its right on the deposit and it agrees that the deposit be delivered by the National Bank of Romania to Bank Polski in Warsaw, with its current organisation and management, and it commits to seeking the end of the legal proceedings and the cancellation of the seizure;
 4. the Polish government, via the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Ministry of Finance, for attesting its agreement to hand over the deposit to Bank Polski and showing it has no claims in this respect;
 5. the National Bank of Poland, in the same vein;
 6. Bank Polski, with its current organisation and management, certifying that the deposit has been received.

Once the agreement has been reached and the National Bank of Romania has taken on these commitments in a formal manner, the deposit shall be handed over to the representatives of Bank Polski anytime, at their request. Bank Polski and the Commission for Polish Relief are to confer the National Bank of Romania an irrevocable mandate, as part of the New York lawsuit, to request for them and in their name the settlement of the dispute and the immediate cancellation of the seizure.

Upon being granted the irrevocable mandate from our lawyers in New York, the National Bank of Romania shall see to it that the deposit is made available without delay.

The Council also recommends the examination of the issue concerning the expenses incurred with storing the deposit, which are to be recovered from the depositor.

The Council deems it necessary for the National Bank of Romania to be aware of the actual and legal status of Bank Polski, since it is obvious from the exchange of letters with the lawyers in New York that Bank Polski in Warsaw is different, at least in terms of organisation, from Bank Polski that made the deposit back in 1939 and that Bank Polski is different from the National Bank of Poland. After examining the Articles of Agreement of the Bank Polski of 1939, it results that the-then Bank Polski was a privately-owned bank with the prerogative of note issue (joint-stock company), whereas Decree No. 14 of 15 January 1946 regarding the National Bank of Poland sets forth “the establishment of the state-owned institution referred to as NARODOWY BANK POLSKI” (The National Bank of Poland) that is vested with the power to issue banknotes (see Article 1).

The representatives of Bank Polski are to contact those of the National Bank of Romania to hold talks on this commitment and make clear the bank’s current status. The *de jure* and *de facto* clarification of the status of Bank Polski is a must since in 1939 it was this privately-owned bank that enjoyed – according to its Articles of Agreement – the prerogative of note printing; nevertheless, pursuant to Decree No. 14 of 15 January 1946 issued by the Polish Republic, a new bank, referred to as the National Bank of Poland, was set up, and this is now the only entity vested with the power to issue banknotes, by enforcing the provisions of Articles 46-65 in the Articles of Agreement of Bank Polski.

In this respect, clarifications regarding the current status of Bank Polski should be provided via the Romanian Embassy in Warsaw, which should also translate and authenticate the proxies granted by Bank Polski to its nominees empowered to hold talks on the return of the deposit.

Under these circumstances and in view of the aforementioned reserves, the Council recommends commencing talks on the letter and the memo sent from New York.

In its meeting of 28 November 1947, the National Bank of Romania Board made a renewed attempt at dealing with the topic of the Polish gold and debated the stage the legal proceedings in New York were in.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs notifies the National Bank of Romania about the telegram sent by the Legation of Romania in Washington D.C. that suggests

paying the fee to lawyers Davis Polk Wartwell Sunderland & Kiendl in New York, who are in charge of defending the rights of Romania in the issue of the Polish gold. Furthermore, the Legation of Romania in Washington D.C. insists upon paying the amount of US\$ 2,000 to lawyer David Avram, a legal counsellor who – at the request of the legation – took charge of this matter.

The Foreign Relations Bureau announces in a letter from the 6th instant that the fees and the charges due to lawyers Davis Polk Wartwell Sunderland & Kiendl, in keeping with the expense account, amount to US\$ 37,780.97 so that, apart from the down payment of US\$ 5,000 made in May 1941, the outstanding balance of US\$ 32,780.97 should be covered.

According to the telegraphic communication by the named lawyers and the telegram received from the National Bank of Poland, the Polish Committee relinquished the action in court against the National Bank of Romania and the seizure of the liquid funds owned by the latter was cancelled.

Mr. M. Ralea, the Minister of Romania in Washington D.C., deems it necessary to seek paying the amount of US\$ 32,780.97 from the funds frozen at Irving Trust Com., New York, as – considering the fact that the amount is due to an influential American company – the US Treasury could authorise the payment. The amount of US\$ 2,000 might be paid by resorting to free currencies.

On the other hand, the Bureau recalls, in virtue of the arrangement between the National Bank of Romania and the National Bank of Poland, that when the Polish gold was entrusted, the latter agreed to defray 50 per cent of the expenses occasioned by this endeavour in US dollars.

Therefore, the Bureau is requesting to decide: 1. whether it should transfer immediately US\$ 32,780.97 and another US\$ 2,000, and the rest on behalf of the National Bank of Poland to be retrieved at a later date; 2. whether a word should be put with the National Bank of Poland to make available half of this amount, i.e. US\$ 17,390.47, in New York; 3. whether it would be appropriate that such transfers, on the day of their coverage, be covered temporarily by funds under «Foreign currency reserves» account until the Ministry of Finance makes the necessary arrangements to defray these outlays from its own funds, and puts a word with the aforementioned Department, on the day of making the transfers.

Director Chr. Emanoil is of the following opinion: 1. the transfer of the amounts of US\$ 32,780.97 and US\$ 2,000 cannot be effected otherwise than from the unblocked funds, not only because we speak of overly large amounts, but also in view of the fact that to ask for the creditor's support is a delicate issue, since these services were rendered a long time ago. 2. we are to effect the payment in full, concurrently with putting a word with the National Bank of Poland for a 50 per cent rebate. 3. I agree with the solution in the memo, i.e. the temporary coverage in leu of the transfer from the «Foreign currency reserves» account and the simultaneous intervention at the Ministry of Finance to top up the rest.

To be submitted to the Council, by the order of Stroe Mihnea, Deputy Governor of the National Bank of Romania.

THE COUNCIL DECIDES: 1. Half of the amount of US\$ 34,780.94 shall be paid, and the transfer shall be covered temporarily by resorting to the «Foreign currency reserves» account; 2. a word should be put with the Ministry of Finance in order to make the coverage in full; 3. a word should be put with the National Bank of Poland in order to transfer the rest of this amount to New York.”

On 17 September 1947, the National Bank of Romania, by the agency of its representatives, Alexandru Jemăneanu, head cashier, and Aristide Constantinescu, head of division, signed the receipt whereby the National Bank of Romania returned to Bank Polski the Polish gold deposited here some eight years earlier.

On behalf of Bank Polski, the protocol was signed by Henryk Mikołajczyk, who had also signed in 1939, and Waclaw Polkowski, bank teller at Bank Polski.

The receipt was written in French and contained the following text: “The undersigned, Bank Polski, by its authorised representatives, Messrs. Henryk Mikołajczyk and Waclaw Polkowski, hereby acknowledges receipt of the fifty-one coffers deposited by Bank Polski with the National Bank of Romania on 10 October 1939, and stated as containing gold. At the same time, Bank Polski declares it has no other claim upon the National Bank of Romania in regard to this deposit.”

The Polish gold was relocated by two Polish military airplanes to Poland. This put an end to a long-running dispute, as the National Bank of Romania returned the entire amount of gold entrusted to it.

More than 100,000 Polish refugees were in the meantime allowed to enter the Romanian territory. They were offered supplies and accommodation by Romanians, and even enjoyed support in their endeavours to take refuge elsewhere, in line with the well-known hospitality of the Romanian people.

The National Bank of Romania managed adequately the Polish deposit and returned it to its rightful owner in due course and in good condition.

Paul Răzuș was born on 22 June 1912 in Codăiești, Vaslui county. His father, Gheorghe Răzuș (born 1844) worked with the National Bank of Romania until 1938 and climbed the hierarchy up to head cashier. Upon graduating “Decebal” High School in Deva, Paul Răzuș was a student of the Law School in Bucharest from where he graduated in 1933. In 1936, he graduated the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies in Bucharest. Three years later, he got his Ph. D. in Law after graduating from the University of Paris (1939). In 1947, he was a deputy director of Agreements Division of the National Bank of Romania, having the right of first signature and countersignature, on both local and international level, for the director position. That same year, he was elected president of the Romanian Tennis Federation. In 1950, he was forcibly discharged from the National Bank of Romania’s payroll.

(A memo in facsimile dated 15 May 1941 whereby the National Bank of Romania gave its consent to the marriage between Paul Răzuș, aged 29, and Viorica Mărculescu, the daughter of a former inspector general within the bank.)

Alexandru Dumitrescu was born on 5 July 1890 in Vida Furculești, Vlașca county. In 1911, he graduated from the High School of Commerce in Bucharest. On 22 October 1912, he started working for the National Bank of Romania at the Discount Division. In 1939, he held the position of general auditor and head of General Control Division. He retired upon request in 1947.

Alexandru Jemăneanu was born on 29 August 1899 in Sbieroaia, Lăpușna county. He was a graduate of the Commercial and Industrial Academy in Bucharest in 1929 and started working for the National Bank of Romania on 7 October 1924. He served as director of the NBR subsidiary in Bazargic and of the NBR branch in Chișinău. He then became inspector general within the Inspectors General Corps. In 1947, he was the National Bank of Romania's head cashier. He was dismissed in 1952.

Aristide Constantinescu was born in Bucharest on 10 March 1892. He got his university degree from the Commercial Academy in Bucharest in 1919 and was appointed head of division within the National Bank of Romania head-office. Later on, he was involved in organising "Operation Neptune", at the successful completion of which Constantin Angelescu, the then NBR Governor, congratulated him.