

**FROM VICTORIA BOULEVARD TO BRANCOVA ULITA.  
A ROMANIAN DIPLOMAT IN BELGRADE: CONSTANTIN G. NANU  
(1905–1906)\***

**ADRIAN-BOGDAN CEOBANU\*\***

**Abstract**

In this article, we attempted to draw a portrait of Constantin G. Nanu, Romania's minister plenipotentiary to Belgrade, whose mission took place in 1905 and 1906. He was the ninth head of the Mission to the Serbian capital, and he was selected on account of his grasp of Balkan politics, his familiarity with Southeastern European issues, as former Secretary General, and his previous experience in a similar position. Parsing the diplomatic reports of the Romanian envoy to Belgrade reveals a number of topics of interest to Bucharest: border incidents, developments in Serbian-Ottoman and Serbian-Bulgarian relations, translations of newspaper articles concerning Serbia's domestic and foreign affairs, and analyses of the rather strife-filled internal political scene. Although he had a short mandate, free of incidents, he tried to better understand the realities of Romania's neighbor south of the Danube.

**Keywords:** Constantin G. Nanu, diplomat, "Macedonian question," Belgrade, King Peter I, Balkan states.

**Introduction**

On the day the Berlin Peace Congress was concluded (July 1/13, 1878), Foreign Minister Mihail Kogălniceanu sent to Romanian diplomatic agents<sup>1</sup> abroad a dispatch in which he declared that the Romanian government "finds it appropriate

---

\* This work was funded by a grant awarded by the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, included in the Research Grants Program, namely Grant UAIC, code GI-UAIC-2017-09.

\*\* **Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu**, PhD, lecturer at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania (Faculty of History), e-mail: [adrian.ceobanu@uaic.ro](mailto:adrian.ceobanu@uaic.ro). In addition to other works, he authored the volumes *Politică și diplomație la sfârșitul secolului XIX. Din istoria relațiilor româno-ruse (1878–1899)* [Politics and Diplomacy by the End of the Nineteenth Century. Contributions to the History of Romanian-Russian Relations (1878–1899)] (Iași: 2017) and *Secretarii generali ai Ministerului Afacerilor Străine (1878–1918). Studii și documente* [The Secretaries General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1878–1918). Studies and Documents] (Iași: 2019).

<sup>1</sup> The Diplomatic Agency of Romania to Belgrade was established in March 1863, and its first leader was Teodor Calimachi. Starting with March 1, 1877, due to budget restrictions, the agency was closed. It was re-opened on February 24, 1878. Until 1878, the Romanian delegates to different European capitals (Rome, Belgrade, Paris, Saint Petersburg, Constantinople, Vienna, and Berlin) were not recognized as official diplomats. Cf. *Reprezentanțele diplomatice ale României*, vol. I (1859–1917), coord. by Gh. Căzan, Bucharest, 1967.

to transform, starting now, the diplomatic agencies and general consulates in Bucharest into legations, the postholders of which will acquire the status of envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary.” Conversely, Romania’s diplomatic agencies abroad would likewise be converted to legations.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the recognition of Romania’s independence by the Congress of Berlin had among its consequences the transformation of diplomatic agencies into legations and the establishing of new diplomatic ranks.

The Law of September 7, 1878 set the following ranks: first class comprised the envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary, class two, the ministers resident, and class three, the *chargés d’affaires*. One by one, the Great Powers and the Balkan states recognized the independence of Romania, and on a reciprocal basis, sent ministers plenipotentiary or resident. At the beginning of the 1880s, Romania had ten active legations abroad, in Athens, Berlin, Belgrade, Brussels, Constantinople, London, Paris, Saint Petersburg, Rome, Vienna, and a Diplomatic Agency, opened in August 1879, in Sofia. Therefore, except for the absence of a diplomatic representative in Montenegro, the Romanian state had active diplomatic missions in the other Balkan states. What was the evolution of Romania’s diplomatic representation until 1914? In April 1898, the Romanian Legation to The Hague was founded, while in 1906, a Diplomatic Agency was established in Cairo. After the acknowledgement of Bulgaria’s independence in 1909, the Diplomatic Agency in Sofia became a Legation. In May 1911, the Bern Legation was constituted, followed two years later by the legations in Madrid and Dürres. Hence, Romania’s diplomatic network extended gradually from 1878 to 1914, depending on the interests of the Romanian state.<sup>3</sup>

According to the laws for organizing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which underwent numerous changes in the period between the Congress of Berlin and the Great War, the Romanian consulates were of two categories: career consulates, with positions occupied by Romanian citizens, and honorary consulates led by foreign citizens. Their purpose was well defined, namely: to bolster the interests of Romanian nationals living on the territory of foreign states, and to preserve Romanian national identity (culture, language, education). To these, a series of economic, legal, and

---

<sup>2</sup> *Independența României în conștiința europeană*, ed. by C. M. Lungu, T. Bucur, and I. A. Negreanu, Bucharest, 1997, p. 208. For more details regarding the situation of Romanian diplomacy at the end of the nineteenth century, see R. Dinu, *Diplomacy in the Old Kingdom (1878–1914)*, in *Romanian Diplomacy – An Illustrated History, 1862–1947*, coord. by D. C. Giurescu, R. Dinu, and L. Constantiniu, Bucharest, 2010, pp. 63–190.

<sup>3</sup> R. Dinu, *Elita diplomatică a Vechiului Regat (1878–1914). Un profil incomplet*, in Idem, *Diplomația Vechiului Regat 1878–1914. Studii*, Bucharest, 2014, pp. 169–178; A.-B. Ceobanu, “Geografia” posturilor diplomatice ale României moderne: numiri și rechemări ale plenipotențiarilor români la Paris (1878–1914), in Idem, *Diplomați în Vechiul Regat. Familie, carieră și viață socială în timpul domniei lui Carol I (1878–1914)*, Iași, 2015, pp. 285–328.

notarial functions were added.<sup>4</sup> In 1881, for instance, there were six first class consulates in Constantinople, Budapest, Odessa, Thessaloniki, Izmail, and Ruse. Hence, there were Romanian consulates in the three neighboring empires, i.e. Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman, in which there were Romanian communities. Thirty years later, in 1911, three more were added: Czernowitz, Janina, and Monastir. As we can see, consulates were founded only in Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, given that in the late nineteenth century, the “Aromanian issue” became an important point on the agenda of decision makers in Bucharest. Basically, the creation of consulates in these cities was not accidental. These were “outposts” of Romanian diplomacy. Furthermore, up to the First World War, there were no general consulates in Greece, only honorary ones, while in Serbia, there were no consular bureaus at all.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the evolution of the Romanian-Serbian relations and the activity of the Romanian diplomats in Belgrade, between 1878 and 1914, we must mention the works published by Miodrag Milin<sup>6</sup> and Bogdan Catană.<sup>7</sup> The former analyzes especially the evolution of the bilateral relations at the end of the nineteenth century, with an emphasis on the “Eastern question” of 1875–1878, on the national goals of the two states as well as their positions concerning the “Macedonian question.” Bogdan Catană’s work is a general one, which insists less on the activity of some diplomats: for example, Constantin Nanu’s name is rarely mentioned. This is one of the reasons for which we focused our attention on the activity of a less-known diplomat.

### Romanian diplomats in Serbia: short overview

In May 1879, the Romanian diplomatic agency in Serbia was raised to the rank of legation, and its postholder received the title of minister resident. Only starting with 1882 was the position elevated to that of minister plenipotentiary, thus upgrading the rank of Lascăr C. Catargiu,<sup>8</sup> who was kept at the helm of the Mission. Obviously, Catargiu’s assignment to Belgrade also rested on his family relations within Serbian society: King Milan was Catargiu’s nephew, his sister’s son. Just as with Constantinople, no less than eleven ministers<sup>9</sup> succeeded each

<sup>4</sup> *Organizarea instituțională a Ministerului Afacerilor Externe*, ed. by I. Mamina, Gh. Neașu, and G. Potra, Bucharest, 2004, p. 415.

<sup>5</sup> *Ministerul Afacerilor Străine. Personalul administrației centrale; delegațiunii în Comisia Europeană a Dunării; serviciului diplomatic; serviciului consular și tribunalului maritim Galați. 15 noiembrie 1911*, Bucharest, 1911.

<sup>6</sup> M. Milin, *Relațiile politice româno-sârbe în epoca modernă*, Bucharest, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> B. Catană, *Relații diplomatice româno-sârbe 1875-1913*, Craiova, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> He should not be mistaken for the conservative politician Lascăr Catargiu. The Belgrade diplomat was also known as Lăscăruș.

<sup>9</sup> Lascăr C. Catargiu (March 11 – September 30, 1882); Mihail Mitilineu (September 30, 1882 – February 18, 1885); Emil I. Ghica (February 18, 1885 – July 1, 1888); Alexandru A. Beldiman

other at the head of the Mission in the Serbian capital, suggesting a certain precariousness of this post. All Romanian plenipotentiaries to Belgrade had short mandates before 1914. Only Gheorghe Rosetti-Solescu held the position for a longer time, approximately six years, while Alexandru Beldiman and Ion Văcărescu stayed for three and five months, respectively.

Some of the postholders in Serbia left testimonies on the social life in Belgrade or the city itself. Alexandru Em. Lahovari, who took charge of the Mission in the spring of 1886, described the city as “in full political fermentation.” Lasting for one month, his mission only occasioned the view of “a city preserving almost entirely the oriental seal.”<sup>10</sup> For Trandafir Djuvara, head of the Mission as of 1887, Belgrade was “an important post, in political terms,” but the city’s social life was missing.<sup>11</sup> Except for the bowling game in the garden of the German Legation, in which King Milan also participated, “there was no entertainment at all during the dead season.”<sup>12</sup> In Belgrade, the presentation of the recall letters did not require any special ceremony, as was the case at most European courts. In September 1909, Victor Cuciureanu was not accompanied by the legation personnel, nor by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He presented the letters to the Serbian King, who entertained him for a few minutes. Nevertheless, later that evening, a gala lunch with 36 attendees took place at the Palace, in honor of the Romanian plenipotentiary. Cuciureanu was sporting the gala uniform, and was accompanied by the secretary of the Legation.<sup>13</sup> His successor, Gheorghe Filaliti, presented his letters in November of the same year. After listening to the speeches, King Peter accompanied by the diplomat retired to a parlor, where they entertained each other in private, enjoying sweets, coffee, liquors, and tobacco. The King withdrew after 15 minutes, saying in Romanian “[see you] this evening,” thus announcing the gala lunch to be held in honor of the Romanian plenipotentiary. Filaliti returned to the Palace at eight in the evening, where he again conversed with the King and other officials.<sup>14</sup>

---

(July 1 – October 19, 1888); Ion Văcărescu (October 19, 1888 – March 16, 1889); Gheorghe Rosetti-Solescu (March 16, 1889 – December 1, 1895); Ioan N. Papiniu (May 1, 1896 – July 1, 1898); Edgar Mavrocordat (October 15, 1899 – April 1, 1905); Constantin G. Nanu (April 1, 1905 – August 1, 1906); Victor Cuciureanu (August 1, 1906 – October 1, 1909); Gheorghe Filaliti (October 1, 1909 – August 1, 1920). *Romanian Diplomacy – An Illustrated History...*, pp. 326–328.

<sup>10</sup> Alexandru Em. Lahovari. *Note, amintiri, corespondență diplomatică oficială și personală (1877–1914): Paris, Petersburg, București, Roma*, ed. by R. Dinu and A.-B. Ceobanu, Iași, 2013, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup> T. G. Djuvara, *Misiunile mele diplomatice (1887–1925)*, ed. by A. A. Căpușan, Iași, 2009, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>13</sup> Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, further AMAE), Fonds *Dosare personale*, letter C, no. 41, unnumbered pages.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, letter F, no. 12, vol. I, unnumbered pages.

In early 1914, the young attaché Dimitrie Iuraşcu came to Belgrade, to work under Filaliti's leadership. Initially animated by the goal of mastering the intricacies of international politics, Iuraşcu described how a great part of his work hours (between 10 AM and 1 PM) in the Belgrade Legation consisted of "[...] typewriting, registering papers in the entry-exit log, encrypting and decrypting the correspondence," basically the chores of an "anonymous scribe."<sup>15</sup> In his spare time, he strolled through the city, admired the uniforms of young Russian officers, played tennis on the Palace's sports grounds with Milla Hartwig, the daughter of the Russian plenipotentiary, and travelled alongside other members of the diplomatic corps to Fiume and Abazzia.<sup>16</sup> Among those representing the interest of the Romanian state in the Serbian capital was Constantin G. Nanu, a figure less known to and rarely studied by Romanian historiographers.

### Constantin G. Nanu: biographical background

Constantin G. Nanu was born on April 29, 1859, as the son of Gheorghe (Iorgu) Nanu, a landowner in Siliştea, near Neamţ, and of Maria Culianu. Like many young people at the time, Constantin Nanu chose to study abroad, namely in Paris, where he earned his bachelor's degree in law, in 1880. One year later, on December 15, 1881, Nanu joined the Romanian diplomatic corps, being appointed supernumerary attaché. From that moment on, he began a long activity in the Romanian diplomatic service, which he ended in 1928. At the beginning of his career, he held various diplomatic positions: second class secretary of legation in Constantinople and Paris, first class secretary in Brussels, and then once again in the "City of Lights." In the Belgian capital, he met Clara Verbeeck, the daughter of a Belgian banker, whom he married. Several years later, in 1894, their son Frederic was born. The Nanu family had two more children, Roger and Andrei. Until he was sent as plenipotentiary minister of Romania to the Greek capital on April 1, 1900, Constantin G. Nanu was also first class secretary of legation in Brussels, Constantinople, and Saint Petersburg. In Athens, he became Chief of Mission for the first time, and he remained there for one year. In May 1901, Nanu was appointed for the first time Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was replaced in Athens by his predecessor, Dimitrie I. Ghica. Constantin Nanu was Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for four years. In this period, he worked with many leading personalities of Romanian diplomacy, like Dimitrie A. Sturdza, Ion I. C. Brătianu, and Iacob Lahovari.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> D. Iuraşcu, *Rugina toamnei. Mărturii de diplomat din vreme apuse*, ed. by N. Iuraşcu, Galaţi, 2012, p. 196.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 197–199.

<sup>17</sup> For more biographic details, see our article: A.-B. Ceobanu, *Tracing the Career of a Forgotten Diplomat: Constantin G. Nanu (Secretary General of the Romanian Ministry of*

### Nanu's activity as Minister to Belgrade

In the spring of 1905, Nanu was Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest.<sup>18</sup> On April 1, on the backdrop of several assignments and recalls in the Romanian diplomatic corps, he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Belgrade, replacing Edgar Mavrocordat, who had held that position since 1899. Thus, Nanu became the ninth postholder of the Mission to the Serbian capital, and he was selected on account of his grasp of Balkan politics (he had previously worked in Athens), his familiarity with Southeastern European issues, as former Secretary General, and his previous experience in a similar position.

Nanu presented his accreditation letters in May 1905, when Belgrade was witnessing political upheaval. The country was in election fever, and the most conspicuous platform was that of the Progressive Party, led by Stojan Novaković, Serbia's minister to Saint Petersburg. The party's rallying cry was clear in its message and implications, foremost with respect to the country's foreign affairs: "the Balkan Peninsula, to the Balkan peoples."<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the political class in Serbia was still under the impact of the coup d'état of May 1903. After this, the Obrenović family was removed by the Karađorđević family, headed by King Peter I, who de facto ruled Serbia in that time. The Romanian diplomats carefully followed the events in Serbia, informing the decision makers in Bucharest about the course of events, as was the coronation ceremony of Peter I in September 1904.<sup>20</sup> In Romania, during the first months of 1905, Gheorghe Cantacuzino was head of the conservative government, and Iacob Lahovary led Romanian diplomacy. Regarding foreign policy, Romania signed an alliance treaty with Austria-Hungary on October 18/30, 1883, which Germany joined on the same day, and Italy five years later. This treaty ruled foreign policy until 1914.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Romania's relations with Serbia were much better than those with Bulgaria, the other neighbor south of the Danube. The "Macedonian question" was not only on the agenda of the states of Southeastern Europe, but also of interest to the Great Powers, an example being the seven point reform program for Macedonia, proposed in autumn 1903 by Austria-Hungary and Russia.<sup>22</sup>

---

*Foreign Affairs: 1913–1918*), in *Transylvanian Review*, 28, no. 2 (Summer 2019), pp. 12–24; see also A.-B. Ceobanu, *Secretarii generali ai Ministerului Afacerilor Străine (1878–1918). Studii și documente*, Iași, 2019, pp. 119–121, 174–191.

<sup>18</sup> At that moment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was headquartered in Calea Victoriei.

<sup>19</sup> AMAE, Fonds *Problema 21/Serbia*, vol. 16, year 1905, *Rapoarte politice de la Belgrad*, f. 87.

<sup>20</sup> B. Catană, *Relații diplomatice româno-sârbe...*, pp. 121–122.

<sup>21</sup> R. Dinu, *Diplomacy in the Old Kingdom...*, pp. 114–122.

<sup>22</sup> For more details, see I. Nistor, „*Problema aromână*” în *raporturile României cu statele balcanice (1903–1913)*, Iași, 2009, pp. 41–66.

In 1905, the Romanian Legation in Belgrade was located at 15 Brankova Street. We cannot say if it was an important street at that moment, but in any case, the address of the Mission changed several times between 1878 and 1914, also following the “whims” of the Head of Mission. For instance, in 1911, it was headquartered in Pozorichna (Pozorišna) Street.<sup>23</sup> The staff was not large: besides the chief of Mission, there was the legation secretary and an interpreter. The task of the latter was very important, at least for one reason, namely for translating various articles published in Serbian newspapers. Parsing the diplomatic reports of the Romanian envoy to Belgrade reveals a number of topics of interest to Bucharest: border incidents, developments in Serbian-Ottoman and Serbian-Bulgarian relations, translations of newspaper articles concerning Serbia’s domestic and foreign affairs, analyses of the rather strife-filled internal political scene. Besides these prevailing aspects, relevant for the present study are those concerning the developments in the bilateral relations during Nanu’s mandate.

Shortly after his arrival in Belgrade, he focused on translating in Serbian the book entitled *România față de Bulgari și Sârbi mai ales cu privire la chestia macedo-română* [Romania Towards Bulgarians and Serbs Foremost With Respect to the Macedo-Romanian Issue]<sup>24</sup> by Ilie Bărbulescu, employee at the Romanian State Archives. The well-known Slavist held that it was in Romania’s interest to support the Serbian cause in Macedonia instead of Bulgaria’s, pleading for closer ties between the two cabinets, in order to stop the Bulgarian expansion. The work was well received in Belgrade, was translated into Serbian with the support of the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was published at a moment when Nikola Pašić’s philo-Bulgarian policy turned into a “complete fiasco.”<sup>25</sup> The attitude of Serbian diplomacy was not circumstantial. As early as 1891, Serbia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs had established a department of propaganda that carried out an active campaign in Ottoman Macedonia. The Serbian consular network was well represented in Skopje, Salonika, Bitolia, Pristina, and Serres, while the duty of the Serbian consuls was well defined, i.e. to support education and religious cults.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, at the diplomatic reception in early July 1905, the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs confessed to Ion Carp, chargé d’affaires, the desire for a rapprochement to Romania, whose interests in Macedonia did not clash with

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ministerul Afacerilor Străine. Personalul administrației centrale...*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> I. Bărbulescu, *România față de Bulgari și Sârbi mai ales cu privire la chestia macedo-română*, Bucharest, 1905.

<sup>25</sup> AMAE, Fonds *Problema 21/Serbia*, vol. 16, year 1905, *Rapoarte politice de la Belgrad*, f. 89.

<sup>26</sup> D. Cain, *Diplomați și diplomație în sud-estul european. Relațiile româno-bulgare la 1900*, Bucharest, 2012, p. 148.

those of Serbia.<sup>27</sup> In point of fact, one month later, Constantin Nanu stated that as early as his arrival in Belgrade, he had noticed “favorable intentions” towards Romanians. For Nanu, an evidence in this regard was the elimination of the hurdles faced by the Romanian Naval Service. To this purpose, the Romanian Legation had pleaded as early as 1903 to the Serbian Ministry of Finance.<sup>28</sup>

The “Macedonian issue” had aggravated the relations between Romania and Greece, leading to the breaking of diplomatic relations in May 1906. The foreign ministers accredited to Belgrade tried to analyse the attitude of the Serbian cabinet with respect to the Romanian-Greek dispute. For instance, the Italian minister held that “there is an isolated tendency to strengthen the relations with Romania and to attempt to draw it to its side; it is not less true that the Serbs of Macedonia belong to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which has recently shown itself more conciliatory with respect to them, often naming Slavic bishops for the bishopric of Uskub, and defending them against the violent propaganda of the Bulgarian exarhists.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, the tendency of the Belgrade Cabinet to approach its peer in Bucharest was also noticed by the foreign diplomats accredited to the Serbian capital, confirming once again the reports sent by Constantin Nanu and his colleagues. On the other hand, the instructions sent by Iacob Lahovari to Nanu were clear, namely to outline to the Serbian leaders the “views of the Romanian government” as well as the “firm but correct attitude that Romania will maintain until the end, so that its just cause will prevail.”<sup>30</sup>

Towards the end of 1905, in November, after admitting that his policy towards Bulgaria was wrong, King Peter sought to approach Romania. Ion P. Carp, chargé d'affaires, had noticed that the Serbian sovereign wanted to send Count Vojnović as minister plenipotentiary to Romania. However, he was opposed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who argued that Vojnović was not a Serbian subject. The Romanian Minister depicted a favorable image of him: the candidate for the position in Bucharest was born in Ragusa, in an old patrician family, held the title of Venetian Count, was highly cultured, and had never held an official position in Austria-Hungary, although he had served as Minister of Justice in Montenegro. Carp held that Vojnović was suited for the Mission in the Romanian capital on account of being an “homme de monde,” and that with respect to foreign policy, Serbia should count on Romania instead of Bulgaria. Filling the position in

---

<sup>27</sup> AMAE, Fonds *Problema 21/Serbia*, vol. 16, year 1905, *Rapoarte politice de la Belgrad*, f. 104.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 116–117.

<sup>29</sup> Gh. Carageani, *Studii aromâne*, foreword by N.-Ș. Tanașoca, Bucharest, 1999, p. 193.

<sup>30</sup> Ministerul Afacerilor Străine, *Documente diplomatice. Afacerile Macedoniei, Conflictul greco-român 1905*, Bucharest, 1905, p. 68.



Bucharest was paramount: the Serbian Legation was in an “embarrassing state of organisation.” Carp suggested to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs to have King Carol I exert “a little pressure,” so that the Serbian King’s strife be eased.<sup>31</sup> Though no evidence points to pressure being exerted from Bucharest, in December of 1905, Count Vojnović was sent to Bucharest, which prompted, among other reasons, the chief of the Serbian diplomatic corps to resign.<sup>32</sup>

The foreign ministers accredited to Bucharest were directly interested in the intentions of the policymakers with respect to the southern neighbors. For instance, in September 1905, the Austrian chargé d’affaires in Bucharest attempted an analysis concerning Romania’s relations with the Balkan states. Referring to the Romanian-Serbian relations, he could even see a collaboration between the two states. His impressions were strengthened by the discussion he had with King Carol I: “The value of the army of the latter country [Serbia] had much to suffer, admittedly, after the assassination of the King, but there is, nevertheless, a core capable of development, as HH claims, while in the case of Greece, we cannot even speak of an army in the true sense of the word.”<sup>33</sup>

Constantin G. Nanu had a rather good relation with King Peter. Among the invitees of the diplomatic lunch of November 16/29, 1905 were the members of the diplomatic corps, of the government, and former ministers, with the exception of those involved in the events of May 1903, a fact noticed by the diplomats accredited to Belgrade. The Serbian sovereign foremostly preferred the company of the German and the Romanian ministers, so he played several chess games with them. Thinking highly of Peter’s stance, the ministers of Italy and France indicated their willingness to ease his mission to the British Royal Court regarding the re-establishment of diplomatic relations.<sup>34</sup> Even though Nanu’s or his chargé d’affaires’ reports had revealed a willingness in Belgrade for a more unequivocal rapprochement to Romania, the feedback from Bucharest was adverse. A possible explanation for this was the reticence of the Romanian decision-makers, who in December 1900 declined Serbia’s proposal to establish a defensive military alliance. Besides the fact that Romania had had a defensive alliance with Austria-Hungary, Bucharest still considered that Romania’s neighbor was not “a trustworthy partner.”<sup>35</sup> In point of fact, the reasons for this view can be seen in the

---

<sup>31</sup> AMAE, Fonds *Problema 21/Serbia*, vol. 16, year 1905, *Rapoarte politice de la Belgrad*, ff. 142–143.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 154.

<sup>33</sup> *Scrisorile regelui Carol I din arhiva de la Sigmaringen 1878–1905*, ed. by S. Cristescu, Bucharest, 2010, p. 382.

<sup>34</sup> AMAE, Fonds *Problema 21/Serbia*, vol. 16, year 1905, *Rapoarte politice de la Belgrad*, f. 152.

<sup>35</sup> R. Dinu, *Dimensiunea balcanică în politica externă a Vechiului Regat la finele secolului al XIX-lea. Observații în marginea propunerii sârbe de alianță din decembrie 1900*, in *Idem, Diplomația Vechiului Regat 1878–1914. Studii*, Bucharest, 2014, pp. 109–168.

events of late 1905: while professing the idea of distancing from its neighbor, Serbia nevertheless established a customs union with Bulgaria, which dissatisfied Vienna and Budapest, at that moment in talks with Belgrade about a trade treaty.<sup>36</sup>

The Serbian-Bulgarian rapprochement was commented by King Carol I and Iacob Lahovari, minister of foreign affairs. The Romanian monarch discussed this topic with the representatives of the Dual Monarchy in Bucharest: "Romania has nothing to object to this rapprochement as long as this event will not compromise the possibility that at the critical moment, Romania will obtain a compensation for its adequate attitude, compensation that, obviously, can only be achieved at the expense of Bulgaria."<sup>37</sup> A few months later, the King's opinion had changed. He was not so contented anymore with the Serbian-Bulgarian rapprochement, because, on the one hand, the Serbian-Austro-Hungarian relations were tense, and, on the other hand, his view of King Peter had completely changed.<sup>38</sup> As a matter of fact, Romania's chargé d'affaires, Ion P. Carp, observed in 1906 that Serbia's foreign policy had reached a crossroad, and the Serbian-Bulgarian rapprochement had a fundamental flaw from its onset, i.e. conflicting interests concerning Macedonia. How should Romania position itself in this regard? The Old Kingdom could "profit financially from the Austrian-Serbian tariff war, but politically, the aim it can follow is to draw apart Serbia and Bulgaria."<sup>39</sup> These lines summarize the goal of the Bucharest Cabinet with respect to its southern neighbors. In several reports dating from the first half of 1906, sent from Belgrade by Romanian diplomats, their own difficulty in carrying out an analysis of Serbia's foreign affairs can be seen: "It is very hard to present an objective and clear picture of Serbia's current political state."<sup>40</sup>

At the beginning of 1906, the telegrams and letters of Romanian diplomats revealed the Customs War between Serbia and Austria-Hungary, which ended only in 1911. The entry into force of a new commercial tariff in Serbia on March 1, 1906 was also important for the Romanian government. Serbian officials showed interest in concluding a trade treaty. Under these circumstances, Constantin Nanu informed the Serbian Cabinet about Romania's willingness to conclude a trade agreement. Romanian-Serbian negotiations began during Nanu's term as minister in Belgrade and ended on December 23/January 5, 1907, when a commercial convention was signed in Bucharest.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> AMAE, Fonds *Problema 21/Serbia*, vol. 16, year 1905, *Rapoarte politice de la Belgrad*, f. 166.

<sup>37</sup> *Regele Carol I în rapoartele diplomatice austro-ungare 1877–1914*, vol. II, 1896–1906, ed. by S. Cristescu, Bucharest, 2014, p. 392.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 397.

<sup>39</sup> AMAE, Fonds *Problema 21/Serbia*, vol. 17, years 1906–1908, *Rapoarte politice de la Belgrad*, ff. 1–2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 42.

<sup>41</sup> B. Catană, *Relații diplomatice româno-sârbe...*, p. 126.

### **Conclusions**

Nanu's mission in Belgrade ended in June 1906. It was a short mandate, free of incidents, during which the Romanian diplomat tried to better understand the realities of Romania's neighbor south of the Danube. He arrived in Serbia's capital in a period of political tension, which lasted until he left. He became Romania's delegate to the European Commission of the Danube in Galați, a position he held until 1909. Then he served in the legations in Rome (1909–1911) and Saint Petersburg, and from 1913 to 1918, he was secretary general at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the interwar period (1920-1928), he represented Romania in Berlin, retiring at the age of almost 70 years, after five decades of activity in Romanian diplomacy.