

## Romania's International Status from the Outbreak of World War II to the Vienna Dictate: Finnish Perceptions

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This article focuses on the Finnish perceptions of one of the most dramatic developments affecting Romania in the first half of the 20th century history, namely the severe territorial losses experienced in the summer and early autumn of 1940. The aim is not only to read a story which has not yet been told regarding the views and perceptions of the diplomatic service of the small Nordic power and of the Finnish press on the developments leading to Romania's territorial division. Because Finland shared with Romania similar concerns on Soviet western policies and a common interest in the development of the Soviet-German relations, the changes in Romania's strategic and territorial environment and the occurrences in the Romanian-Soviet were important also from the perspective of the Finnish decision-makers who were planning Finnish foreign policy. It is also interesting to see how the anti-Soviet mindset of Finnish leaders affected their assessment of Soviet-Romanian relations. Equally interesting is to assess the extent to which the kinship between the Finns and the Hungarians influenced Finnish politicians and public opinion's appraisal of what the Hungarian historiography calls the Vienna Award and the Romanian historiography calls the Vienna Dictate of August 30, 1940. The diplomatic reports used as the main source of this article deal more with the preliminaries and circumstances leading to this outcome, the analyses concerning the actual events being less numerous. I concentrate in this chapter on the reports dispatched by Finnish diplomats accredited to Bucharest, although diplomatic reports coming from other capitals are also

considered. The newspapers, focusing on the surprising and swift developments on the Western front and on the Finnish-Soviet relations, have paid less attention to these alterations in South-Eastern Europe than it would have otherwise been the case. There are also some entries in the Finnish politicians' diaries noticing the changes taking place in South-Eastern Europe.

The signature of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was a milestone in the destruction of the European power equilibrium, its third article giving Soviet Union free hand in Bessarabia.<sup>1</sup> The possible effects of the German-Soviet agreement on the in-between small European countries made the Finnish policy-makers eager to get adequate information about what was supposed to be its hidden part. Geneva was one of the diplomatic European centres where many well-informed diplomats and journalists resided. Therefore, the diplomats accredited to neutral Switzerland constituted for their Foreign Ministries an important source of information. The activity of the Finnish Legation in Switzerland is a proof of the opportunities and difficulties created by the flow of information circulating from many different and often contrasting sources. A case in point is a report of the Finnish Legation addressed to the Finnish Presidency and Foreign Ministry only a few days after the German-Soviet pact was signed. The dispatch called the attention to the interpretations gaining currency in Geneva that the agreement between the two sides provided that the USSR received the eastern quarter of Poland and at least Latvia and Estonia if not Lithuania, too. A defeated Poland was to be reduced to a

statute similar to that of a protectorate. It was also assumed that Germany was going step by step to grab hold of Hungary, Yugoslavia and a mutilated Romania. Russia was going to annex Bessarabia while Hungary the western areas of the country while remaining a German ally.<sup>2</sup> This report is remarkable for the precision of its predictions concerning the main East-Central European evolutions in the subsequent year. It is also likely that the report, one of the best documented reaching on the desk of the Finnish decision-makers, in connection with news coming from various other channels, was given due consideration at the highest levels of the Finnish foreign policy. Already this report anticipated that Romania will become one of the main victims of the new order in East-Central Europe.

The need was also felt to grasp the rationality behind the astonishing Nazi-Communist rapprochement. Shortly after what Immanuel Kant would have called and indeed many historians and analysts beginning with E.H. Carr considered as the long armistice ended and the war started to ravage again in Europe, the Finnish chargé d'affaires to Bucharest considered this issue in a diplomatic report dispatched to his foreign minister Eljas Erkko. Hiitonen was inspired in his despatch by an interview with his Soviet colleague Kukolev. In a manner that will become a doctrine in the Soviet historiography, the Soviet diplomat blamed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact on Poland and Romania whose attitudes had allegedly forced his country to abandon the negotiations with Britain and France and conclude the treaty with Germany. The Soviet diplomat denied the rumours that the agreement with Germany included secret clauses. He justified it by the Soviet desire to stay neutral in the war. Regardless of the insistence placed by the Soviet diplomat on the fact that Soviet Union was a country content with its territory and natural riches, thus opposed to any idea of conquest, Hiitonen remarked his colleague's insistence on the fact that Moscow was judging the international developments coolly in order to draw all possible advantages from it.<sup>3</sup>

In a changing geopolitical climate, Romania tried to pursue a policy of adaptation to realities. This was visible in Romania's interest in developing trade with Germany, finding a rapprochement with its revisionist neighbours, Soviet Union included, and constructing an area free of conflicts in South-Eastern Europe, Europe's traditional powder keg. A significant part of the Romanian elite believed that oil might be turned into the trump card of Romania's neutrality. Oil was of course important and, as Hiitonen recognised, its acquisition constituted the most important goal of the big powers in Romania. The Reich was, as a consequence of its shortage of oil and limited possibilities to get it without paying an expensive political price, the most interested power in acquiring it. However, the Romanian government hindered the supply of oil to Germany for as long as possible without jeopardising the country's security. Although the average amount of oil shipped through the Danube was – according to Hiitonen's estimations – the equivalent of 500 carriages a day, during the first days of the war this amount decreased to 200 carriages a day. The official explanation was that the pipeline connecting the oilfields to Giurgiu was broken. However, as Hiitonen emphasised, there was no hurry to fix it despite the German requests for modernising the pipelines.<sup>4</sup>

The Finnish diplomat's understanding of Romania's stand towards the European developments during the last quarter of August and the first quarter of September coincided with the views of Romanian PM Armand Călinescu as seen in an entry in the latter's diary of August 24: king Charles II was opposed to any 'coquetry' with Germany and wanted to avoid anything which might delay a British victory against the Reich. The Germans were nevertheless alert that the Romanian Government was responsible for the delays and consequently decided to appoint an official to raise this issue in Bucharest.<sup>5</sup> This fits quite well with the conclusions derived by Hiitonen in an ampler analysis of the situation in East-Central Europe shortly before the war broke

out. Hiitonen checked his views by exchanging opinions with foreign diplomats from the Bucharest diplomatic corps such as the Yugoslavian ambassador Yovan Douthitch and the Polish Legation secretary Narzumsky, the latter diplomat having formerly been accredited to Helsinki. The conclusion Hiitonen reached at was that war was held unavoidable both in the Romanian Foreign Ministry and by the Polish diplomat. Narzumsky did not illusion himself that Romania would do anything but stay neutral at least on short term. There were good reasons to do so as the alliance between Poland and Romania was but in theory *erga omnes*, in practice being limited by the fact that the military convention stipulated a military action only in case of Soviet aggression. From the conversation with Douthitch Hiitonen remained in no doubt that Romania and other Balkan states were going to stay neutral, at least in the first phase of a European war following a German attack on Poland, although such a policy would not always coincide with the public opinion expectations. Perhaps to his surprise, Hiitonen discovered that the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was interpreted by his interlocutors rather in ideological than in security terms they stressing the meeting points between the two ideologies.<sup>6</sup>

The advent of the World War II caught Romania in Hiitonen's opinion socially, politically, economically and militarily poorly equipped to meet its enormous challenges. There was, however, a big national effort in which Romania engaged itself to raise the level of its army and its sources of supply. The crown was in the centre of this project, an indication of the consciousness that a lost war had the potential of overthrowing the royal house and the country's monarchical regime from power. There was also a hope that the undemanding Romanian peasants and workers, used as they were to live and labour in poor conditions, would be fitted for military action in circumstances unbearable to western soldiers. These views were shared by the Yugoslavian and Polish diplomats. The army also benefited the help of French instructors.<sup>7</sup>

Following an initiative by his prime minister, the king accepted on September 4th that the Council of Ministers adopt a declaration stressing Romania's intention to continue its policy of peace. Because of the rumours that the declaration combined with the partial mobilisation of the army signified that Romania, in fact, was preparing for war, the king felt that the declaration failed to clarify the country's official standing. Therefore, the Royal Council was convened to address this issue. Hiitonen believed that the task of the Royal Council was to find a solution that will avoid breaking the ties with the Western Allies and Turkey while at the same time will diminish the worries of the domestic opinion and the concern of the Axis that Romania will join France, Poland and Britain against Germany. The outcome was a Royal Council communiqué whose key is to be found in article 3: "the Council, unanimously, has decided the strict obedience of the rules of neutrality as established in the international conventions towards the belligerents in the current war."<sup>8</sup>

Finland shared with Romania the worries that the outbreak of war constituted a big threat on its fundamental values. Therefore, the Finnish officialdom started to turn their eyes to Romania and to show more interest in Romania's evolutions. This is true also about the statute of neutrality declared by the Royal Council. Hiitonen remarked that, at the beginning, the dominant opinion was that Romania will not proclaim neutrality with the Political Department of the Romanian Foreign Ministry supporting the view that such a document was needless. The situation was tense as Romania took some steps towards mobilisation with the largest part of its forces massed in the west against a possible German-Hungarian attack. Although springing from the Romanian worries about the Hungarian military moves towards the Romanian border, the Hungarian envoy put forward an official protest and announced that his country considered countermeasures. As Hiitonen noticed, the worries of the leading circles coincided with those of the population where

the anti-German feeling was the dominant note.<sup>9</sup> Hiitonen checked his opinions on Romania's foreign policy intentions with four of his foreign colleagues in Bucharest, including the Turkish ambassador Suphi Tanriocer. He was wrong in his assessment that Turkey was ready to join the Western Allies and that military expeditions coming from these countries might be dispatched to Romania. He was nevertheless true in arguing that the king wanted to strengthen the neutrality and to end the rumours about an early Romanian joining in the anti-Axis camp.<sup>10</sup>

The outcome of the declarations on neutrality was positive at least as far as the German worries are concerned. The Nazi representative for *Bukarester Tageblatt* maintained he was satisfied with the text of September 6 communiqué. Nevertheless, this did not put an end to argumentations about the potentiality or even necessity of an Allied expedition to South-Eastern Europe. Nor did the declaration of neutrality mean the final end of the worries about the country being embroiled one way or another into the conflagration. Hiitonen reported about Romania's additional mobilisation that had chiefly taken place in order to transfer the bulk of its troops to Bessarabia which he attributed to the increased underground communist activity that had already forced the Romanians to supplement the local border guards and to start preparatory fortification works. The situation at the border with Bulgaria remained relatively calm, Sofia's neutrality being guaranteed for as long as Italy maintained its non-interventionist policy.<sup>11</sup> Hiitonen himself was unimpressed by Romania's declarations of neutrality. Quoting military experts, he argued that the end of neutrality depended on the time the Allies needed to put in motion a strong military expedition. In the meanwhile, Romania knew that it was unable to mount a serious opposition to a possible German attack were Romania to join such a venture.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the Finnish diplomat was inclined to overemphasise the significance of Romania's pro-Allied feelings in decision-

making process believing that it was up to France and Great Britain to get an early Romanian joining in the war.

The weeks following the signature of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact witnessed the radical restructuring of the political space in the in-between Europe. The first victim was Poland, Romania's ally and an important actor at the Baltic Sea. As Hiitonen noticed, Romania shared with Poland not only the history of 18 years of alliance but also the difficult geopolitical position and the presence at its borders of resolute and strong revisionist powers. Romania's potential enemies in the first half of September were Soviet Union, Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria, so to say the two biggest powers east of France and two of the other three neighbours. It is no wonder then that the attention paid by the European diplomacy to Romania was bigger than ever since mid-1930s when Titulescu was in charge of his country's foreign policy gaining for Bucharest international reputation. In the meantime, however, Soviet Union had turned from a potential ally to a potential enemy. Even Germany was comparatively less feared by the Romanian political elite. The Finnish diplomat noticed that it was assumed among many leading Romanians and foreign diplomats that Germany was not going to attack Romania for as long as the Reich received the adequate quantities of grains and oil. Many also regarded Germany as a key factor in moderating Hungary and Bulgaria's revisionist aims. Similarly, Hiitonen believed that Hungary could undertake a military venture only with Germany's connivance, while Bulgaria's policy towards Romania depended on Italy.<sup>13</sup>

The outbreak of the European war, Poland's defeat and the Baltic States' submission in front of the extensive Soviet demands did not constitute the only dramatic developments the Romanians witnessed during September and beginning of October 1939. On September 21 Romania lost as a result of a political murder its second prime minister in six years. The assassination of the Armand Călinescu followed in line of a wave of state

and anti-state terrorism, which seriously undermined the country especially after 1933. The Finnish envoy doubted that the crime was solely due to the adversity of the right-wingers against Călinescu whom Legionnaire Movement held responsible of masterminding the assassination of "Captain" Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu. Hiitonen, a Social-Democrat and adversary of Nazism, was a supporter of the idea that Germany was involved in the crime. He quoted reliable sources in arguing that the crime was planned to take place while the German troops were occupying the Polish areas near the Romanian border. The murder of the PM would have created the pretext for an intervention of these troops in Romania. However, the murderers were late with doing their job while, on the other hand, the Red Army reached too rapidly to their assigned positions at the border with Romania.<sup>14</sup> Hiitonen appreciated Călinescu as an energetic, pro-British politician whose activity could but bring benefits to his country.<sup>15</sup>

The Finnish diplomat had to explain however the part played by the right wing in the crime which he found easy to reconcile with the idea that Germany had ordered the action. After exchanging views with the Latvian envoy Ludvigs Ēķis and foreign journalists and learning that documents were found in the German House in Cernăuți (Czernowitz) proving that the local Germans were planning an uprising at the time when the German troops appeared at the border in order to give the Germans an excuse for an intervention Hiitonen felt strengthened in his opinion. He was convinced that the legionnaires who had previously sought refuge in Carpathian Ukraine and Slovakia committed the crime with German support on German order. The Finnish diplomat held the official denial of the Ministry of Propaganda a consequence of the German pressures on the Romanian Government. Hiitonen also believed the theory that the Spanish envoy was somehow involved in the crime.<sup>16</sup> This scenario to which Hiitonen returned several times has however no evidence in the archives.

It is today a fact that king Charles II bore with difficulty the murder of Călinescu which was of course one of the reasons for the frequent changes of governments during the subsequent period.<sup>17</sup> At the end of November Hiitonen reported about the third PM after Călinescu taking hold of office. Hiitonen remarked the delicate balance of the influence of foreign powers with the Anglo-French seemingly increasing their influence with the appointment of the new government, which was an indication of Romania's goal of pursuing a policy of neutrality among the big powers. Though the PM and many ministers were pro-French, there remained however pro-German ministers in the government.<sup>18</sup>

The implications of the Polish defeat for Romania were multiple. The defeat was a result of deficiencies in defence organisation leading to a military chaos for the defenders and of inadequacies of the weaponry. As such, the Polish defeat constituted a warning to small countries such as Romania and Finland of the need to improve their war preparedness. Hiitonen, as a former diplomat in Prague, was not impressed by the performances of the Polish diplomacy and he even held the Polish diplomacy responsible for their defeat. He referred back to Poland's contribution to the division of Czechoslovakia as playing in the advantage of Polish adversaries by exposing the country to a German attack and even downrightly accused Beck's foreign policy as having played against Polish most sacred interests. Hiitonen understood nevertheless that the Polish defeat adversely affected Romania's interest. The first obvious complication was the entrance of Polish active officers on the Romanian territory. They were, in compliance with the international law, interned. The Romanian government was put in a difficult situation because of the German threats that any departure of Polish officials from Romania would be considered an unfriendly action which might call a German retaliation. This warning was taken seriously by the Romanian leadership and therefore the Polish considered a contingency plan of forming a committee either in Paris or in

London.<sup>19</sup> The demands of the Polish officials for being allowed to leave Romania for another neutral state were turned down.<sup>20</sup> Hiitonen also noticed the paradox that Romania was the country to attempt in the spring to enlarge the alliance with Poland so as the two nations act at unison both in Central Europe and in their relations with the Great Powers. In the end, Polish refusal served Romania's cause.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, as a consequence of the Red Army's advance into Poland, Soviet Union started to be considered an immediate menace on Romania's security and integrity. The Finnish chargé observed that Soviet Union's policies puzzled many a Romanian diplomat to the extent that "nobody had a clear idea but only suppositions based on certain trends." In the diplomatic circles the opinion was that Soviet Union joined the Reich in order to get, under the guise of cooperation, the possibility to close Germany's road to South-eastern Europe. On the other hand, Germany's foreign policy was considered skilful for as long as it achieved the occupation of Slavic states with the help of other Slavic nations: Poland was helpful in the occupation of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union in that of Poland. German commercial policy was also doing its task in preventing Slavic solidarity.<sup>22</sup> The relations between Romania and the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Polish defeat became a key issue in Romanian and foreign political circles. Hiitonen shared the opinion of his colleagues in the diplomatic corps that the USSR was not going to undertake any military action but would hurry to safeguard her interests in case that other countries threatened Romania's territorial integrity or political independence. However, Hiitonen assessed Romania's position as a difficult one due to the lack of army materials, the poor training of the soldiers and the deficient organisation of the army. This fuelled the rumours about negotiations with Hungary and Bulgaria in the spring and summer to cede territories to these neighbours as a means to appease them. Even though the outbreak of the war silenced these rumours, the opinion was that Romania could barely oppose

a German or Western Allies' violation of her sovereignty.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, the Romanian government attempted to maintain good economic relations with Germany. Hiitonen reported to Helsinki that the German economic delegation to Bucharest explained that it needed not any longer grain from Romania, because it got it from Soviet Union but oil, being prepared to import grain only with the condition that the export of oil was increased. Romania seemed not only a prisoner of the political circumstances created by the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, but also of the economic circumstances created by the German-Soviet economic agreements.<sup>24</sup>

While in the first weeks following the signature of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact the mainstream opinion was that the Soviet policy was motivated by peaceful intentions, after the Red Army occupation of eastern Poland the opinion had changed. The fear was now that Soviet Union will pursue an active, perhaps aggressive policy. This view gained currency in Romania, too. Hiitonen remarked the worries the broadcast of a pirate radio station that the Russians were going in a short span of time to free their Bassarabian and Bucovinian' brothers created in Bucharest. Many believed that it was a Soviet attempt to spread a feeling of incertitude in Romania. This led to the fact that many Romanians started to consider Soviet Union as posing a more serious menace than Germany. The flow of opinion was that Hitler was prepared to respect the sovereignty of the country for as long as the Reich received the merchandises it needed from Romania. Moreover, a German push into Romania might attract an answer from the Allies. On the contrary, the Romanians were afraid that even an Allied victory would not be able to drive back Soviet Union if this power ever occupied Romania.<sup>25</sup>

For these reasons, Romania started to drive the bulk of its military forces towards the border with the Soviet Union after earlier keeping them close to the borders with Hungary and Bulgaria. It also contributed to diminishing Romania's aversion towards Germany whose support was now eager to

enlist against Soviet Union. Another conclusion was that an aid from the Allies against Soviet Union was unlikely to come. This new line of reasoning, as Hiitonen remarked, was further augmented by the general opinion of the Romanian political circles and foreign diplomatic corps that the German-Soviet cooperation was short-lived. This derived from the opinion that the German-Soviet rapprochement was brought about by a series of miscalculations, the agreement being already obsolete. It was still maintained alive by Germany's attempt to end the war with the Western Powers by making use of its relations with Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> A critic of any form of totalitarianism and imperialism, Hiitonen disputed this opinion which started to gain ground in the official circles and to influence Romania's foreign policy. He believed that Soviet Union was going to continue the German line in its foreign policy for as long as the Reich, for any new assistance, offered it a big price, mostly on the expense of its neighbouring small states. Additionally, the continuation of the war weakened Britain, a fact from which Moscow drew only advantages. Germany, on its part, was prepared for a political trade in order to gain the necessary space of manoeuvre to achieve its ends. Hiitonen now also shared the opinion that the ideological foundation of Germany and Soviet Union was more akin than it seemed at first sight. As a proof, Hiitonen quoted *Bukarester Tageblatt* which emphasised the importance of the German-Soviet friendship and appreciated that the Wehrmacht and the Red Army will once again march together if they will be ordered to do so.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, Hiitonen was not positive about Romania's chances of playing the two totalitarian powers one against another. However, Hiitonen was aware that on the long run in the German-Soviet relations may suffer because of Soviet drive toward Great Russian patriotism or Pan-Slavic imperialism with the potential of leading to clashes against the Pan-Germanic hegemonic aspirations.<sup>28</sup> Hiitonen's analysis will prove its validity in summer and autumn of 1940 when

Romania will become a victim of both the cooperation and the competition between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

As it may have been expected, the German smooth victory over the Polish Army and the absence of a strong Anglo-French response had a profound impact on Romania. In the eyes of the general public, the prestige of the Allies was weakened. Hiitonen also observed that the determination of the political elite to strictly obey the rules of neutrality was strengthened. This went to the point that the censure supervised that the newspapers published a balanced quantity of information and pictures from both fighting camps. Romania also improved its commercial ties with the Reich and resumed the oil exports. A paradox was that the Polish defeat affected not only Romania, a country counted already before the war among Germany's enemies, but also Hungary which started to consider a rapprochement with Romania.<sup>29</sup>

A month and a week following the outbreak of the German-Polish war, when Poland ceased to exist on the international arena and Soviet Union was busy with re-asserting its influence in Eastern Baltic, the Finnish charge wrote a long diplomatic dispatch concerning the Great Powers' interplay of the interests in South-Eastern Europe. As it was the case with his previous evaluations, the conclusions of this dispatch were not very promising for Romania. Borrowing an idea which Eduard Beneš had enunciated back in 1938, Hiitonen counted that the great powers interested in the Balkan evolutions were Italy, Germany and Soviet Union, each of them keeping the other's influence in check. Conversely, the interests of France and Great Britain, on whose support Romania counted, seemed rather indirect. Although Soviet Union and Germany had concluded a pact, the lack of trust between the two parties was a fact accepted in a rare concord by the representatives of the Western Powers and the Axis. The Soviet policy at the outbreak of the German-Polish war led Hiitonen to the same conclusion: the rapid advance of the Wehrmacht into Poland

determined the Soviets mobilize three-four million soldiers, conclude peace with Japan and head into Poland. When advancing into Poland, the Soviets occupied exactly the same areas which, in German hand, would have endangered the Soviet security. Moreover, in the diplomatic circles in Bucharest it was noticed that Stalin would have been disappointed were the Western Powers accept Hitler's proposal of concluding peace. Soviet Union was doing its best to strengthen its position on the expense of Germany and of the neighbouring countries. Hiitonen concluded that it was only a matter of circumstances that the two countries drew closer together.<sup>30</sup> In assessing Hiitonen's interpretations it must not be forgotten the fact that the secret provisions of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact remained concealed except for a few initiated. This contributed to him deciphering with a wrong code some of the actions undertaken by the two parties. It was however clear even for uninitiated that the astonishing rapprochement between the two opposing totalitarians will be endangered by their rivalries for influence and resources in East-Central Europe.

The competition between Italy, Germany and Soviet Union resulted in a shaky balance of power in the region. Following the downfall of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland the things have changed and the balance tilted in favour of Germany as a major actor and Hungary as a minor player in the region. Germany skilfully played its advantages by resorting to clearing agreements in order to bind the little countries of the region to the Reich taking advantage of the initial passivity of Britain and France and of Italy's limited space of manoeuvre as the weaker player in the region. Italy's remaining trump card for redressing the balance was to increase the South-Eastern European countries' resistance by encouraging them to improve their mutual relations. However, Germany, which had previously acquired only a quarter of its total imports from this region via the Danube, was increasing this percentage and was even trying to get more merchandises via the Mediterranean and the

Straits. The effect was that German political influence was once more on the increase. Germany's growing influence worried the Soviet Union and strengthened Soviet temptation to force its way not only into Bessarabia but also to Bucovina. Hiitonen emphasised that "with Bessarabia in its hands Soviet Union could oversee the Danube Delta and therefore control the traffic there". The Finnish diplomat also discovered that many diplomats and also the general public expected that Soviet Union would push its way into Romania in a short while.

The Finnish chargé concluded that Romania answered the changes taking place in its political environment with a policy of continual re-assessment and adaptation. Against all odds, the Romanian government displayed confidence and repeatedly affirmed its readiness to defend the country's territorial integrity. The government expected in case of Soviet aggression to enlist Germany's support at least insofar as the Reich might prevent Hungary and Bulgaria to join in the attack against Romania. With this goal in mind, Romania had already agreed with Hungary to mutually decrease the forces concentrated nearby the frontier so that the Romanian Army could concentrate alongside the border with Soviet Union.<sup>31</sup>

What the Finnish charge remarked as a feeble trend following Soviet intervention in Poland started to become more important in practical policies in the subsequent months. Once the fear of Soviet attack had amplified the antipathy towards Germany had lessened. Not everyone nevertheless believed that Soviet Union was undertaking preparations to attack Romania. The optimists still assessed that the Red Army entered in Poland for its benefits and would not intervene in Romania except for the case that it had to safeguard its interests when some other country attempted to push its way into this country. Reasons of optimism gave also the fact that the undertaking of an Allied expedition to this region seemed out of the agenda and consequently Germany was not expected to take any action in Romania for as long as it



received the merchandises it badly needed. Hiitonen was nevertheless reserved in his estimations. He did not entirely rule out the possibility of a Soviet attack and was uncertain whether Romania was going to oppose resistance in such an eventuality. If, however, Romania decided to go to war, the Red Army's quick advance into Poland showed what might result from it. Yet, according to Hiitonen, "Soviet position towards Romania depends on the relations between the Great Powers in this region." In the meantime, Bucharest tried to avoid conflicts and started to make concessions to the German and Ukrainian minorities.<sup>32</sup>

Romania's main contribution in these circumstances was to work out projects committing the South-Eastern European states to neutrality, a policy springing from Romania's aim of preserving its territorial integrity. The tactic was to persuade Hungary and Bulgaria to renounce, at least temporarily, their revisionism so that Romania would turn its attention to east. In conjunction with this interest came also Romania's interest and estimations of the Turkish-Soviet and the Turkish-Allied relations. One of the most important issues on the agenda of the international diplomacy was the statute of the Straits which both Turkey and the Allies favoured keeping opened. This created the Allies the possibility of falling in Germany and Soviet Union's back. Hiitonen observed that this possibility influenced Romanian and Balkan policies. It also seriously lessened the likelihood that Romania granted Germany supplementary commercial advantages. It also made a Soviet attack against Romania risky. On the other hand, the opening of the Straits presented to Soviet Union both advantages and disadvantages. If Soviet Union intended to expand in the region its interest was to have the Straits locked in order to avoid the intervention of the British Fleet. On the contrary, if Germany wished to occupy Romania it was in Soviet Union's interest to allow the Straits open in order to have Germany facing an obstacle in its intentions. Hiitonen interpreted Stalin's serene reaction to the debate over the

regime of the Straits as an indicator that Stalin was not yet planning an attack over Romania on a short while. Germany was the only great power that categorically supported the idea of closing up the Straits. Keeping them open interfered with its plans of dominating South-Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup>

With these clouds on the horizon coming from some many different quarters, the views of the members of the Romanian government varied as about the most advantageous policy to protect their country's interests. PM Argetoianu<sup>34</sup> and many members of the government showed readiness for cooperating with Germany. Argetoianu was not perhaps uninfluenced in his policies by his position in the leadership of the local branch of a German bank. Other important figures in the government manifested a pro-Allied stance. Foreign Minister Grigore Gafencu was the most outstanding pro-Allied figure in the executive. Foreign minister's views made his position in the government difficult though not untenable. The PM and Ernest Urdăreanu<sup>35</sup>, king's closest associate, wanted him removed from power. They were unsuccessful for as long as the King supported Gafencu's foreign policy line. Though a German himself and not indifferent to Germany's aspirations, Charles II was critical of Nazism. This made the Finnish diplomat conclude that the situation in Romania was unstable both internally and in respect to foreign policy.<sup>36</sup>

It has been widely accepted in the historiography the importance played by Turkey throughout World War II as a regional Balkan player in avoiding spreading the instability in the region.<sup>37</sup> During the first months of war, Turkey supported Balkan cooperation. However, this state's foreign policy depended quite heavily on its relations with Soviet Union. Turkish assumption was that Soviet Union was going to maintain a defensive standing in the international relations. As Turkish ambassador Tanrıoer appreciated, if Soviet Union switched to an openly aggressive stance, his country would not expect until it fell victim to Soviet ambitions.<sup>38</sup> If Turkey was a mid-sized power,

Italy pretended to be one of Europe's great powers. Italy's interests in the Mediterranean region were widely-acknowledged. The Balkans, as a prolongation of the Mediterranean Sea, was also considered in Rome as a natural *debut*. Italy enjoyed good relations with Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania and registered progresses in its relations with Greece and Yugoslavia, to some extent also with Turkey. Therefore, the Italians assumed quite naturally that the augurs were favourable to increase their influence in the region. Yet, Hiitonen correctly scaled down Italy as more junior player in the region in comparison to Germany and the Soviet Union. Consequently, the Finnish diplomat predicted that, in the last resort, the fate of the region depended on the relations between these two powers.<sup>39</sup>

Because Soviet goals in the region stood in the centre of his attention, Hiitonen extensively reported on Soviet Union's foreign policy. He shared with the US envoy to Romania, Franklin Mott Günther, the view that the new Soviet imperialistic policy followed in Tsarist Russia's footsteps. As about the aims of this policy, Hiitonen appreciated that it envisaged the annexation of the frontier regions. Romania, one of the likely objects of this regenerated imperialism, had hoped that its situation would improve during the Moscow-held Soviet-Turkish negotiations. The talks had however broken out because of Turkish adamant opposition to closing off the Straits to outsiders. Hiitonen interpreted Soviet insistence on the Straits being closed to outsiders as a result of either a Soviet plan to attack Romania hindered by the possibility this country might receive help by the sea or as a Soviet desire to prevent the situation when itself would be a victim of an attack coming from the sea.<sup>40</sup>

Hiitonen paid continual attention to the way Romania reacted to the swiftly changing international climate. He criticised in mid-October the Romanian diplomats for taking with relative ease the potential dangers hanging on their country. The Romanian diplomacy realistically estimated that the

opposition between Germany and the Western Powers will continue and based Romania's security on the divergent interests of the great powers. The Finnish diplomat stopped short of blaming them of wishful thinking. Yet, as Alexandru Cretzianu, the general secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intimated to Hiitonen, the Romanians were worried because of the Soviet refused to appoint a new envoy to Bucharest. In fact, the diplomatic circles accredited the idea that the Soviets were not going to take this step until the differences with Romania were settled.<sup>41</sup> In Romania's favour, Hiitonen accepted that Gafencu's foreign policy seemed to bear fruits in the fall of 1939. His slogan "The Balkans, to the Balkan peoples!" started to be embraced by states and politicians throughout the region.<sup>42</sup> This trend was due to the desire of those nations to increase the efficacy of small states' response to bigger players' intent to increase their influence in the region. Hiitonen considered that even countries such as Hungary and Bulgaria which had previously taken a negative attitude to the stabilisation of the region had changed their minds. Bulgaria declined Germany's proposals of joining the war and looked more favourably disposed to preserve her neutrality no matter the circumstances. It was Bulgaria's revisionism aims which still prompted it to put pressure on Romania, enlisting even Soviet support. Such aspirations found a good reception in Moscow.<sup>43</sup>

If in the few first weeks following Soviet incorporation of eastern Poland Hiitonen believed that it was a matter of little time until the USSR will step into Romania, by the end of October and beginning of November he continued to believe that the Soviet goal remained unchanged but its achievement was not going to happen soon. Although together with the US envoy he considered Soviet Union more of a national-imperial than a communist-revolutionary country, they were still dubious whether it considered itself as strong as to pursue a policy of aggression. For the moment Soviet Union was compelled to practice a defensive policy. Soviet Union

might be tempted to take such an action because of the likelihood that any other great power may gain one-sided authority in Romania. Like Hiitonen, Gunther also remarked something that will have a great importance in Romanian decisions over the next years: in many Romanian circles it was assumed that if need will be, Germany was ready to lend support against Soviet Union.<sup>44</sup> These views were shared by Romanian diplomats whom Hiitonen interviewed. A former envoy to Oslo, Dimitrie Juraşcu was recently appointed to the head of the political division of the Foreign Ministry. Although reserved in his declarations, Juraşcu believed that Soviet Union was not prepared to start any military conflict. Like many other Romanian diplomats, he appreciated that the friendly relations between Germany and Soviet Union were not long-lasting. He held different opinions on Germany's strategic choices predicting that, threatened by defeat, Germany might bind the Allies to turn together against Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup>

Romanians' general mood was, however, defeatist. Hiitonen noticed that the general opinion was that this country was not going to put up a strong resistance except for the situation that it received help from abroad. The support of the Allies was uncertain, even in case of a German attack. Italian support, at least Italian political support, was taken into consideration in Romania. Similarly, Italy was not considered in Bucharest as equally threatening as Germany and Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> In his dispatch of November 12, Hiitonen referred to Romania's weaknesses and the way the great powers were taking advantage of them. Hiitonen noticed that Germany enjoyed a bigger economic influence in Romania than the Allies. Yet, the fact that not everyone was happy with Germany's increased influence was obvious from the fact that the concessions Germany received on paper had to face many practical difficulties in being implemented into practice. The transportation of merchandises to Germany met with many difficulties not all of them caused by the Romanians but also by the limited possibilities of transportation through

Poland and on the Danube.<sup>46</sup> Romania's attempt in this interplay of interests to find its escape in neutrality Hiitonen found viable for as long as the other regional powers adopted a similar policy and even joined in a neutral block. The possibilities to get this block formed were, however, not very bright. Hiitonen remarked the fact that the Romanian-Hungarian relations grew once again tense after the arrest of Transylvanian Hungarians members of a secret league planning an uprising in case of a foreign attack on Romania. Moreover, Romania was aware of the fact that Soviet Union was eager to cooperate with Hungary on an anti-Romanian basis. The same was true regarding Bulgaria, another state envisaged to take part in the Romanian-planned block of neutrals, where Moscow was appealing to both Bulgarian revisionist aims and Pan-Slavism in order to prevent the birth of a neutral block. Germany was also opposed to this project, afraid of losing its own position of influence. Finally, Soviet Union was also trying to gain influence in Yugoslavia by appealing to anti-German and Pan-Slavic feelings.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the chances of forming such a block were meagre already from its inception although the potential menace of the quiet competition for power between Germany and Soviet Union in South-Eastern Europe - concealed as it was under the mask of a pretended friendship - was comprehended by the political leaders in the region. The reaction was to consider Italian and especially Western Allies' increase of interest and influence into the region less damaging and even welcomed but not decisive steps were taken for the construction of the neutral block.<sup>48</sup>

The Finnish envoy continued to analyse the evolution of the German-Soviet alliance in December 1939. According to Hiitonen, each of the two powers was attempting to covertly strike against its ally's interests but none was prepared to recourse to an open action. Especially Germany was paying attention to avoid any gesture which might prevent the Soviets deliver the raw materials the German war machine needed. Consequently, by now

the opinion of the members of the Romanian government was that Germany would not support them in the event of a war taking place between Romania and the Soviet Union. This was also what PM Tătărescu<sup>49</sup> believed and therefore the Romanian government multiplied their efforts of equipping the army and developing the armament industry. Additionally, the Romanian government undertook the fortification of central Bessarabia in order to protect the mouths of the Danube. The tragedy was that Romania was not threatened only from the east, Romanian policy-makers fearing also an attack coming from Hungary and Bulgaria. Finnish charge noticed in this respect the change of the attitude of the Bulgarian press toward Finland which turned from sympathetic at the beginning of the war to pro-Soviet. Hiitonen even made reference to the information circulating in the diplomatic circles regarding a Stalin proposal for giving his backing to Bulgaria in the fragmentation of Romania.<sup>50</sup> In reality, Soviet Union suggested in October 1939 a Soviet-Bulgarian pact of mutual assistance. In return, Soviet Union would support Bulgarian territorial demands in the Dobrudja region. The Bulgarian refusal was determined by the desire to enlist German support rather than the Soviet one in achieving this outcome.

The Finnish press showed a rather meagre interest in these developments. Most part of the information on South-Eastern Europe was constituted by short pieces of information, only seldom commented. There were however some notable exceptions. Such was the case with the conservative newspaper *Uusi Suomi* of November 13 that published an article titled *The struggle for influence in South-Eastern Europe*. The newspaper commented on the foreign policies of Italy and Turkey as preventing the strengthening of Soviet influence in the region. Turkey, the dominant country in the region, was not however prepared to join an open anti-Soviet policy, a fact which was inscribed in the treaties concluded between Britain, France and

Turkey. Germany's main scope was to increase its economic trade with the region.<sup>51</sup>

The annexation of Bessarabia in all its phases was observed with interest by the Finnish authorities. The German amazingly swift victory over France re-activated Soviet interest in taking hold of the regions assigned to it in the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. On June 24 a bulletin of intelligence of the Romanian military underscored the activation of the Soviet policy in Romania and in the Eastern Baltic and the very big preparations of the Red Army by Romania's frontiers.<sup>52</sup> This information was confirmed by the intelligence gathered by the General Staff on June 27 or 28. The General Staff concluded – while the news concerning the Soviet ultimatums suddenly spread – that Soviet troops were ready for military operations against Romania.<sup>53</sup> With Romania yielding to the Soviet ultimatums, the advance of the Soviet troops was brisk, units of the Red Army reaching already on June 30 in some areas in Bucovina, on the Pruth and on the Danube, the new frontier between the two countries.<sup>54</sup> Already on July 2 the new border was reached by strong motorised-mechanised Soviet troops in its entirety.<sup>55</sup>

The malevolence of the Soviet leadership in dealing with Romania was noticed in the documents of the Romanian General Staff. The documents emphasised that the advance of the Soviet troops continued also on July 2, the Red Army adopting a hostile attitude and acting according to a carefully drawn plan for achieving the disintegration and disarming of the Romanian troops. Mechanised Soviet troops outran the Romanian units and stopped them from their retreat in many spots. The soldiers originating from Bessarabia were called to leave their units and remain in their native province. Actions were taken also by some local inhabitants by encouraging the local soldiers to defect from the Romanian Army, attacking the officers and plundering the trains. All this was taking place in a situation when Hungary was unofficially mobilising her troops.<sup>56</sup> The Hungarian and Bulgarian pressure on Romania at a time when Soviet Union demanded the return of

Bessarabia was remarked in the dispatch of the Finnish general consul in Ankara who quoted Turkish official circles.<sup>57</sup>

In his press report of mid-July 1940 Enescu, a press attaché of the Romanian Legation in Helsinki, analysed the impact of the Soviet ultimatum regarding Bessarabia upon the Finnish press. In general, the ultimatum made a strong impression in Helsinki. The flows of news started on June 27 at 7 o'clock by special editions of the main newspapers quoting DNB and Budapest. The press even informed about Romania giving up of naval bases in Constanța and on the Danube. The following day the press published news that created the impression that the USSR's demands enjoyed the support of the Axis, which did not see its positions weakened by the cession of Bessarabia to the USSR. Other telegrams informed that Hungary and Bulgaria, after discussions with German and Italian representatives were planning to take profit of the Soviet demands in order to have their own claims satisfied. The telegrams concluded that Romania would not put up a military resistance. The Social-Democratic Party mouthpiece *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* of June 28 carried an article by Vaara called "the Balkans, the corner of Europe where the hate and envy foment." The article was favourable to Hungary. Finland's kin nation was considered as the Trianon Treaty's expropriate. The British guarantee to Romania was considered valueless. The article also stated that Germany wanted exclusivity in the Romanian oil industry. The main Finnish newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, with Liberal leanings, informed on June 29 about Romania's acceptance of the ultimatum. The newspaper considered that there was to be expected more demands from Hungary and Bulgaria. The following day *Helsingin Sanomat* carried an article called "Bessarabia" which underscored the predominance of the Romanian population in Bessarabia, but anticipated that this province's integration with the USSR would increase Moscow's influence in the Balkans. The same newspaper observed on July 1 that

Romania looked decided to take up arms to oppose Hungary and Bulgaria's demands. Enescu concluded that the press, due to the geopolitical situation of Romania, did not consider the possibility of a Soviet-Romanian war. The Finnish press also observed that the Soviet demands were made with the Axis's acquiescence. It also doubted that Romania would resist militarily to Hungarian and Bulgarian demands. The Finnish newspapers also noticed that Romania was looking for a rapprochement with the Axis and therefore renounced the British guarantees. Interpreting the news and comments of the Finnish press, Enescu concluded that the news regarding the Balkans sprang from sources favourable to the supporters of revisionism.<sup>58</sup>

Finnish policy-makers were perhaps equally impressed and worried by Soviet new action. However, the developments on the Western front where the entire European organisation was being revised following suit the German victory, the Soviet incorporation of the Baltic States and the Soviet request of June 27 that the Åland Archipelago be either demilitarised or fortified together with Soviet Union<sup>59</sup> can be held responsible for the relatively little records on their perceptions of the Soviet advance into eastern Romania. For instance, PM Risto Ryti had an entrance in his diary on June 28 simply recording the Soviet annexation of the two provinces.<sup>60</sup>

The loss of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina did not end the Romanian diplomacy worries about the Soviet goals in Romania. Reports originating from the Romanian military attaché to Stockholm appreciated that the USSR needed in the west, for its security, a natural border, meaning in the south a line situated on the Carpathians and lower Danube.<sup>61</sup> Other signs were also worrisome. On July 17 a bulletin of information of the General Staff remarked the intense Soviet activity in southern Bessarabia.<sup>62</sup> The Soviets were gathering intelligence especially concerning the Romanian military establishment in the Isaccea-Tulcea region.<sup>63</sup> The following day the USSR closed the border with Romania.<sup>64</sup> In fact, the Soviets were very

active at the border with both Finland and Romania, the Romanian General Staff gathering relevant intelligence in this sense. In the meanwhile, Finland closed ranks with Germany. The reasons, as the Romanian military correctly understood, had to do with the ongoing Soviet demands on this country so that Finland sought support from Berlin. The Reich accepted this orientation and supplied Finland with weaponry, equipment, counsellors while also helping in the fortification of Åland with a small military mission headed by a colonel.<sup>65</sup>

The day the Vienna Dictate was being imposed upon Romania, the Finnish Legation in Bucharest informed the Political Department and his minister that Romania had to agree to the loss of "almost all of Transylvania" due to the pressure coming from Italy and Germany and the fear of Soviet mixture in the events.<sup>66</sup> The implications of the Vienna Dictate were analysed in a series of diplomatic reports. Aaro Pakaslahti's dispatch of September 21 was considered among the most interesting ones and was brought to Ryti's attention. Pakaslahti – one of the most capable Finnish diplomats, soon to become secretary-general of the Finnish Foreign Ministry – assessed that the German and Italian Vienna decision was predictable due to the incapacity of Romania and Hungary to solve their dispute. The decision-making process was not an easy one but, when finished, it was implemented rapidly and – Pakaslahti insisted – against Romania was made use of all possible pressure and this country being threatened with destruction. The Vienna Dictate was a heavy blow to Romania, although it was more reasonable than what had been expected in the foreign diplomatic circles would happen. The result was that none of the two countries was satisfied with the decision. In Romania the dominant feeling was frustration, including dissatisfaction with the domestic situation that was likely to take a difficult turn, although the government, wisely, had invited in the Crown Council that agreed on accepting the Vienna Dictate representatives of the opposition. According

to the Finnish diplomat, the Romanians believed that the loss of such a large portion of their country was a way of paying dividends to their previous friendly relations with France and Britain. Pakaslahti appreciated that the fact that Romania was not treated even worse had to do with the fact that in the Romanian foreign policy had already acknowledged a change. He attributed to the PM Gigurtu and foreign minister Manoilescu the merits for Romania not having been treated harsher in Vienna. The Romanians were still feeling the pain for the situation when Bessarabia was given up and the Romanian troops remained insulated in that province because not having received advanced orders on the attitude to take.<sup>67</sup>

In the critical days when Romania was exposed to this unbearable pressure, the Soviet Government presented notes to Romania on border violations. The Romanian envoy in Oslo was an eyewitness of the Soviet border violations when visiting his farm in Moldova nearby the border of the USSR. The amplitude of these violations was described by the Romanian diplomat to his Finnish colleague on August 31 as very grave. They amounted to true raids: "the Russians had transferred their despotism to Romania by crossing the border and shooting and capturing Romanian border guards." Although Pakaslahti's contacts with his Soviet colleague were distant and official, the Finnish envoy was surprised to receive on August 31 for the first time his visit at the legation. During the conversation, the Soviet minister downplayed the importance of the border incidents with Romania which he described as small clashes without any important significance. He pointed out that the border was not yet delimited, but the border commission had already started its work. Pakaslahti mistakenly interpreted the border guarantee given by the Axis Powers to Romania as a proof that Germany and Italy kept Soviet Union aware of the developments. A further evidence of this reality was considered Manoilescu's statement of August 31 that Romania did not want to use this guarantee against its

neighbours.<sup>68</sup> The only consolation for the state of misery felt by the Romanians was the Axis' guarantee. The fear of the Soviet intentions was general in Romania and the guarantee served to alleviate this anxiety. Pakaslahti showed a keen interest in the Romanian developments and believed that Finland should turn its eyes to their southern neighbours' policies.<sup>69</sup>

Regarding the Finnish diplomacy's attitude towards the territorial losses experienced by Romania there is an interesting diplomatic report dispatched a year after the events had taken place by Finnish envoy to Bucharest Eduard Palin. The Finnish envoy emphasised the drama of the Romanian nation which lost in a space of a few months 101,522 km<sup>2</sup> (34% of total areas) where many of their compatriots lived. The Finnish diplomat accused King Charles's attitude of vesting all the responsibilities on himself, and publicly doing so, which in the end cost him his throne. Palin believed that it was probably that Romania had not much to hope from putting up resistance against the Red Army. When the Soviet ultimatum of June 26 was known in Bucharest, the attempts to obtain support from Germany, Italy or the Balkan Entente's states were met with advices of reaching an understanding with the Soviets. The context was sombre with no add to be hoped from anywhere, with expectances that its resistance was not to last for longer than maximum a few months and with the possibility that Hungary and Bulgaria would join the conflict in order to achieve their revisionist ends.

Although Palin believed that the decision was correct, thus the country being saved from total destruction, the king's exuberant declarations in the previous months were responsible for the fact that "the Romanian nation was not prepared to that, did not expect it and did not understand it". The expenses made for new lines of fortifications in Bessarabia seemed pointless in the new circumstances and a deep disappointment and feeling of humiliation spread out the country. Charles's reaction of appointing a pro-German government and of drawing closer to Germany

while simultaneously renouncing the Anglo-French guarantees was also a fiasco. Romania was forced at the end of August and beginning of September 1940 to yield to the pressure of the Axis' powers and give up half of Transylvania to Hungary and southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria. The Finnish diplomat correctly assessed the difference between the loss of Dobrudja which left comparatively little bitterness (except for the disappointment that Bulgaria did not agree that Romania preserved within its borders Silistra and Balçic) and that of Transylvania which provoked a deep moral and political crisis ending with the abdication of the monarch. In exchange, Romania achieved a guarantee for the inviolability of its borders which was valuable but could not make the people forget about their lost territories.<sup>70</sup>

It is important to note that while Romania crossed one of the most difficult periods of its history, Finland was not faring better. The Helsinki politicians were not free of worries regarding the USSR's political intentions. The German victory over France provoked anxiety in Finland. France was one of the great powers supporting Finland during the Winter War. A document of the Romanian General Staff pointed out to the very energetic Soviet policy in the Eastern Baltic aimed at consolidating the position of this great power in the region.<sup>71</sup> The meaning of this policy was correctly understood in the Romanian General Staff as an attempt to consolidate the Soviet military positions towards Germany in these forward regions.<sup>72</sup> Everything started with the Soviet accusations about alleged violations of the Soviet-Baltic treaties signed the previous autumn concerning actions taken in the Baltic States against Soviet interests and against the garrisons of the Red Army stationed in these countries. Moscow demanded an increase in the number of the Soviet troops garrisoned in these states.<sup>73</sup> The Romanian military observed the complicated situation in the Eastern Baltic during the annexation of the Baltic States in the summer of 1940 and did not rule out the possibility that Soviet Union was going to take a similar action against Finland, too.<sup>74</sup> On June

20 while the Soviet troops poured in the Baltic States, the General Staff remarked the deep concerns spreading in Finland where the situation was considered very serious. Politically, the Soviet-Finnish relation was tense. As a symptom of this tension, Soviet Union accused Finland of not complying with the peace provisions and made difficulties in the economic negotiations. The Soviets also laid blame on the Finnish authorities for destroying everything in the territories they were forced to give up to the USSR and, by doing so, not complying with the peace provisions.<sup>75</sup> Finland reacted to this situation by calling-up six additional military contingents and concentrating its troops in the Karelian Isthmus and in Åland.<sup>76</sup> The Finnish military preparations continued towards the end of April. On the other side of the border, Soviet Union concentrated troops in Murmansk and in Kuolajärvi. The Finnish Government and population rejoiced with the landing of Allied troops to Norway<sup>77</sup>, which gave them a hope that they would not be left alone in case that the Soviet leadership decided to resume its aggression.

Sharing the fate of the small and mid-sized nations situated in-between Soviet Union and the Third Reich, Romania and Finland had to pay in 1939-1940 a big human and territorial price for the rapprochement between the two European totalitarian giants. Additionally, Romania was requested to give in significant portions of its people, territory and riches to small neighbours which choose to align themselves to Nazi Germany. The flow of information concerning the Romanian evolutions toward Finland – a distant country

according to those times' perception – was guaranteed only by the Finnish Legation to Bucharest. The press paid relatively little attention to Romanian developments having for most of the time acquiring information from third party sources. No Finnish press correspondent was present in Romania in 1939-1940. The Finnish sympathy to Romania at its time of hardship was not therefore guaranteed. Hiitonen's reports are both analytic and comprehensive concerning the interplay of interests in South-Eastern Europe and Romania's choices in these circumstances. The Finnish diplomacy and press was sympathetic toward Romania when this country had to give in Bessarabia in June 1940, which reminded the Finns their own losses a few months earlier. The loss of half of Transylvania – although correctly understood as a result of German domineering designs in Central – South-Eastern Europe – was conversely interpreted by many Finns in the light of their kinship with the Hungarians. Finland was a democratic state and therefore it is no wonder that not all of the Finns considered the situation according to this romanticist-nationalist mindset. Well-informed diplomats such as Pakaslahti and Palin understood the profound moral and political crisis which resulted from the Vienna Dictate and did not hesitate to inform the political decision-makers of their views. When the eyes of the majority of the Finns were turned to the Western front, to the Baltic States and especially to the Soviet intentions on Finland, Pakaslahti even prompted his superiors to assess more carefully the developments in Romania.

#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie, eds. *Nazi-Soviet relations, 1939-1941. Documents from the archives of the German Foreign Office* (Washington: Department of State Publication, 1948), pp. 72-78; Ion Şişcanu and Vitalie Văratec, eds. *Pactul Molotov-Ribbentrop și consecințele lui pentru Basarabia. Culegere de documente* (Chişinău: Universitas, 1991), p. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Geneva Legation's dispatch no. 17 of 28.08.1939 to the President and the PM, Kansallis arkisto (hereafter, KA), Risto Rytin kokoelma 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ensio Hiitonen's dispatch no. 7 of 6.09.1939, Ulkoasiainministeriö arkisto (hereafter, UA), 5, C 14; for the Soviet view on the failure of negotiations with Britain and France, see Gromyko and others *Soviet Peace Efforts on the eve of World War II (September 1939-August 1939). Documents and records* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976).



<sup>4</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 1 of 24.08.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>5</sup> Armand Călinescu, *Însemnări politice 1916-1939*, ed. Al. Gh. Savu (București: Editura Humanitas, 1990), pp. 426-427; Hiitonen's dispatch no. 2 of 26.08.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>6</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 2 of 26.08.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Călinescu, 428-431; Regele Carol al II-lea al României, *Însemnări zilnice. 1937-1951. Vol. II. 13 martie - 15 decembrie 1939*, ed. Nicolae Rauș (București: Editura Scripta, 1997), pp. 204-207.

<sup>9</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 5 of 4.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>10</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 8 of 7.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 9 of 12.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 12 of 23.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>15</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 13 of 25.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>16</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 15 of 30.09.1939 and no. 24 of 12.11.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ioan Scurtu, Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX (1918-1948)* (București: Paideia, 1999), pp. 355-356.

<sup>18</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 27 of 27.11.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>19</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 14 of 25.09.1939 and no. 18 of 10.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>20</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 15 of 30.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>21</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 18 of 10.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>22</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 14 of 25.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 15 of 30.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 10 of 16.09.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>30</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 17 of 9.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>31</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 16 of 9.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*; on Romania's policy on minorities in 1939-1940, see Radu Florian Bruja, "Romania's minorities in the National Revival Front", in Silviu Miloiu and others, eds., *Europe as viewed from the margins. An East-Central European perspective from World War I to Present*, Valahia University Press, 2008, 201-212.

<sup>33</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 22 of 25.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>34</sup> Prime Minister of Romania between September 28 and November 23, 1939.

<sup>35</sup> Hiitonen characterized this *homo regius* as a man who was willing to gain money from wherever and however. As an associate of Malaxa who was doing his businesses with the Germans, Urdăreanu was taking position against Elena Lupescu who was supporting Max Auschnitt, the representative of Vickers.

<sup>36</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 22 of 25.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>37</sup> Elisabeth Barker considers Turkey "a bulwark guarding their position in the Middle East against German, Italian or Russian ambitions", see Elisabeth Barker, *British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War* (London: MacMillan Press, 1976), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 19 of 18.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> And not only, the support coming from the Western Allies, especially from Britain, being obvious. Britain considered stability on the European continent as a precondition for the maintenance of British security and economic wellbeing. This was also true about the Balkans, Anita J. Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the origins of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 29.

<sup>43</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 19 of 18.10.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>44</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 23 of 5.11.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 24 of 12.11.1939, UA, 5, C 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Prime Minister of Romania between November 24, 1939 and May 11, 1940. He was appointed at the helm of a Romanian government for the first time on January 5, 1934.

- <sup>50</sup> Hiitonen's dispatch no. 29 of 9.12.1939, UA, 5, C 14.
- <sup>51</sup> *Uusi Suomi* of 13.11.1939.
- <sup>52</sup> Report of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 13243/B of 24.06.1940, Centrul pentru Cercetarea și Conservarea Arhivelor Istorice Militare - Pitești (hereafter, CCCAIM), 902/1940, 269-271.
- <sup>53</sup> Bulletins of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff nos. 13.397/B of 27.06.1940 and 13469/B of 28.06.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, 242-244.
- <sup>54</sup> Bulletin of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 13.639/B of 30.06.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 227-230.
- <sup>55</sup> Bulletin of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 13.790/B of 2.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 206-211.
- <sup>56</sup> Bulletin of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 13.899/B of 3.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 197-201.
- <sup>57</sup> Finland's general consul to Ankara's telegram of 28.06.1940 to Witting, KA, Witting C11a.
- <sup>58</sup> Enescu's dispatch no. 4 (press report for 28 June-3 July, registered with no. 03423 of 15.07.1940), Arhivele Nationale Istorice Centrale (hereafter, ANIC), National Propaganda. Foreign Press 278/1930-1940, 119-128.
- <sup>59</sup> See Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim, *Memorii*, ed. Dumitru Preda and Adrian Pandea (București: Editura Militara, 2003), p. 259.
- <sup>60</sup> KA, Risto Rytö Diary, Notebook no. XIII.
- <sup>61</sup> Report of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 15167/B of 22.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 58-61.
- <sup>62</sup> Bulletin of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 14.867/B of 17.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 90-93.
- <sup>63</sup> Bulletin of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 14.967/B of 19.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 74-78.
- <sup>64</sup> Report of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 15047/B of 22.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 68-71.
- <sup>65</sup> Report of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 15227/B of 24.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 47-50.
- <sup>66</sup> The Finnish Legation in Bucharest's dispatch no. 20 of 30.08.1940 to the Political Department 2 and to Witting, KA Witting C11a.
- <sup>67</sup> Pakaslahti's dispatch no. 145 of 21.09.1940 (news from Finnish representatives abroad), Risto Rytin kokoelma 19.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>70</sup> Palin's dispatch no. 23 of 8.06.1941 to Witting, UA, 5, C 14.
- <sup>71</sup> Report of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 12820/B of 15.06.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 330-332.
- <sup>72</sup> 1st Information Bureau of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section of the General Staff's bulletin of information no. 12.090/B of 3.06.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 411-415.
- <sup>73</sup> 1st Information Bureau of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section of the General Staff's bulletin of information no. 11.190/B of 18.05.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 516-518.
- <sup>74</sup> Report of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 15317/B of 25.07.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 41-45.
- <sup>75</sup> 1st Information Bureau of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section of the General Staff's bulletin of information no. 10.675/B of 8.05.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 572-573.
- <sup>76</sup> Report of the 1st Bureau Intelligence of the Second Section of the Romanian General Staff no. 13080/B of 20.06.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 295-297.
- <sup>77</sup> 1st Information Bureau of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Section of the General Staff's bulletin of information no. 10.106/B of 25.04.1940, CCCAIM, 902/1940, pp. 743-745.