

## ROMANIA'S TREASURY – GUARDED BY THE RUSSIAN “ALLY”; NEW DATA AND TESTIMONIES FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION<sup>11</sup>

Ph.D. Professor Viorica MOISUC

Decades of concern regarding the vast and complex issue of the history of the Romanian Treasury sent for temporary storage in Moscow, during the military occupation of Romania by the Central Powers from 1916-1918, have materialized in a volume of annotated and commented documents, summaries, articles, and studies published by Romanian historians, including myself.

Romanian archives, keepers of the original documents (National Bank of Romania, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, State Archives, Manuscripts Section of the Library of the Romanian Academy, private archives, countless volumes of event participants and eyewitnesses' testimonies), a series of documents from foreign archives (for example, the French Military Archives at Vincennes, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, the Archives of the League of Nations and others) were the Romanian literature's documentary basis on this subject. **What was missing were testimonies from Russian archives, the existence of which was denied by Russian and Soviet historians and politicians.**

Historian **Ilie Schipor** has managed to break into these archives and reveal hundreds of documents (unknown – *declaratively* – by the Russian side) that fill in the gaps in the information so far, so that a whole series of aspects of the Treasury's history appear in a different light and requires re-evaluations and new conclusions. We are talking about the work ***Destiny of the Romanian Treasury – Arguments from the Russian archives***, Oscar-Print, 2021, 446 pages: collection of Russian documents (including facsimiles of the originals), translated, annotated, commented, notes and introductory study.

I will refer to this new evidence in the following pages.

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<sup>11</sup> This is a chapter from the work *Calvary of the Romanians in the struggle for liberation and national integration*, vol. II – in progress.

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In terms of the international relations and the Romania-Russia bilateral relations, the Russian Soviet regime created, a century and a quarter ago, the “*Treasury Problem*” intertwined with another, created at the same time, that of “Bessarabia” which, in June 1940, amplified, including “Bukovina” as well.

Throughout the research carried out over many decades in archives and libraries in Romania and other countries, I have managed to decipher to a large extent the nature of these problems, the connections with the foreign policy of Romania, of Russia, of the other European powers in the context of the evolution of the international situation over a long period.

As I have already stated in my works, the full knowledge of the historical truth is almost impossible even when the sources of documentation do not stop you in any way. The more you deepen the research of a certain phenomenon, process, set of events, etc., the more new and new questions appear, the more other avenues open for the study of new aspects, suspected or not. Things get complicated when access to documents is deliberately obstructed for political or other reasons.

The issue of the Treasury is one of them. It is debated on all levels – historical, political, economic, and financial, diplomatic, etc., **from January 1918 until today**. Opinions, theses, hypotheses were issued, proposals were advanced, formulas for solving this complicated problem, all have remained theoretically, some being kept only in the desiderata stage. Is there, after one hundred and twenty-five years, a prospect of “*solving*” this problem fairly? No one could give a sharp answer. In fact, the question is *what do the two parties involved mean by “problem solving”*? From a legal point of view, from the point of view of morality, things seem to be as simple as possible: **Romania** started from the objective truth that a good entrusted to someone for safekeeping based on official documents, with precise provisions and commitments for restitution, ***is to be returned to the owner without the need for new negotiations, discussions, etc.*** **Russia** has refused until this day, for a century and a quarter, violating its own signatures and commitments, to return to the rightful owner the property entrusted to it for safekeeping. Why? Because the Soviet power simply looted everything in its care but did not recognize and does not recognize, so the positions of the two competitors have remained diametrically opposed.

What Russia returned to Romania in **1935** and **1956** is a small part of the Treasury, restitutions that have not included *the gold reserve – coins and bullions – of the National Bank sent to allied Russia in 1916-1917*.

Starting from a **false premise – allied** Russia in the First World War, with firm commitments signed in official documents (Bilateral Convention of

1914 and Political and Military Conventions of August 1916) –, the Romanian Government entrusted – forced by circumstances or not – to its “ally”, also based on official documents signed by the Romanian and Russian plenipotentiaries, all the wealth of the Romanian state. Deposited in the Palace of the Kremlin and other Russian banking institutions, also with proper documents and firm commitments of the Russian Government **to preserve, guard and return Romania, this fortune has been simply confiscated by Lenin in the name of the new Soviet Power, without any rights**, under ridiculous pretexts, at the same time declaring broken the diplomatic relations with Romania – the “ally” that Russia had betrayed on all fronts since the beginning of the war. It happened on **January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1918**. This arbitrary act has a strange provision: it states – acknowledging – that it dealt with 1) the “**Romanian gold**” and 2) that “**it will be returned to the hands of the Romanian people**” – statements empty of content, refuted by all Russian politics from that moment and to this day.

For a century and a quarter, the plaintiff honestly demanded his rights, bringing to the table a pile of official documents and testimonies, which were opposed only by words, forgeries, accusations, and totally unjustified claims. In fact, the confrontation – over a century and a quarter – has taken place and is taking place between **the force of law and the law of force**.

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After January 1918, on the agenda of Romanian foreign policy, obtaining the return of the confiscated treasure by Soviet Russia was a permanent goal. The issue was discussed at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919-1920, at the Reparations Commission, etc. An important moment was the *International Economic Conference* in Genoa **in 1922** where the Romanian delegation led by Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu obtained the decision for **Russia to return its treasury** to Romania, a decision that remained only on paper. However, two significant issues should be noted: in Genoa, **Romania** unilaterally **committed itself to non-aggression against Russia**; this commitment is also enshrined in the **1926 Romanian-French bilateral treaty**, this time strengthened by **the French guarantee**, at the same time, in **1922**, concomitantly with the work of the Genoa Conference, the Soviet and German foreign ministers, **Cicerin and Stresemann signed the secret treaty of cooperation on all levels at Rapallo, violating the Treaty of Versailles**, among other things, by the availability of the USSR to give Germany free rein to rebuild its arms industry and army on Russian territory.

In the 1920s, several rounds of Romanian-Soviet talks took place – in the context of the absence of normal diplomatic relations – with the main subject being *the restitution of the Treasury*. All without reaching a common point of view. It should be noted that the Soviet side constantly tried to combine the issue of the Treasury with that of Bessarabia, whose union with Romania was never recognized by Moscow. The last round of talks took place in Vienna, in **1924**; The Soviet delegation's attempt at *bargaining* has been recorded then: Romania's renunciation of its Treasury in exchange for Russia's recognition of the Romanian possession of Bessarabia, an offer that was rightly rejected by the Romanian side. At the same time, Moscow organized a vast **subversive armed action of political destabilization** in Romania with the support and collaboration of the Romanian section of the Comintern – **the Communist Party** (the so-called Tatar-Bunar uprising).

Since then, **punctual official negotiations** on the issue of the Treasury have not taken place.

In the years 1928-1933, there was a certain reorientation of the USSR's attitude towards the collective security policy, towards the League of Nations; however, this situation did not mark a fundamental change in its foreign policy. But, its accession in 1928 to the Briand-Kellogg Pact to outlaw the war as a tool for resolving disputes between states was part of this new attitude, stating that Moscow's territorial claims to Romania did not suffer an amendment: the "**Litvinov Protocol**" signed in Moscow in **1929** between the USSR and its Western states with the stated intention of implementing the Briand-Kellogg Pact was supplemented by the *Official Declaration* of the Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov, in which it was stated that the act signed in Moscow should not be understood as a *waiver* of Russia's territorial claims against Romania.<sup>12</sup>

Nicolae Titulescu's diplomatic action in 1933–1936 sought to use every opportunity arising in European political developments to achieve not only the normalization of diplomatic relations with the USSR but also the securing of the Dniester border through precise commitments of this power. The re-establishment of the Romanian-Soviet diplomatic relations in June 1934 created the illusion of a real positive political-diplomatic evolution. In such a context, far from being able to obtain the restitution of the Treasury in its entirety, in **1935** archival, numismatics values, acts and documents as well as a large number of worthless objects were restored. **The gold of the National Bank deposited in the Kremlin has not been returned.**

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<sup>12</sup> See, Viorica Moisuc, *Premisele izolării politice a României 1919-1940*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1991, Part II, Chapter I, "The Genoa Conference and the Rapallo Agreements (1922)", pp. 154-179.

The degradation of the international situation in the years 1937-1940 removed from the diplomatic agenda of Romania the issue of the Treasury's restitution. The dangers that were announced for the territorial integrity of Romania, for its independence and sovereignty, were continuously aggravated. In **1940**, as a result of ***the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the aggression of the USSR against Romania made the first breach in the national territory: Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina***. The others followed. The German-Soviet cooperation opened in Brest-Litovsk and strengthened in the following years, overcoming the "ideologies" – considered by many to be irreconcilable –, inevitably led to the unappealable condemnation of Poland and the outbreak of the Second World War.

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For Romania, the Second World War brought back to the forefront the issue of ensuring the security of the NBR Treasury, in the circumstance when the evolution of events, on a military, political, diplomatic level, outlined the danger of the Soviet invasion.

*„In the Archive of the National Bank of Romania there is a file with no. 20 of the Administrative Directorate – we read in the paper **The Treasury of the National Bank of Romania in Moscow**<sup>13</sup> – which reveals another dramatic episode in the history of the Old Lady. In a way, it is about re-editing similar facts and events during the First World War, but with a different development, other actors, and a different purpose. It is a demonstration of the fact that a story like that of the Romanian treasury in Moscow could have had another ending.”*

Of course, we can always talk about “another ending” of the events that took place along the centuries, but we must always consider the context in which those events took place. Thus, for example, in the context of the failure of the Romanian military offensive in the first phase of the *National Unification War*, of the way Romanian-Russian political and especially military relations evolved, the acceptance of the solution to evacuate the Treasury to Russia, abandoning Switzerland, Denmark and England's suggestions, must be analyzed according to the main decision-makers: Romania was in a political and military alliance with Russia, France and England, but the effective cooperation on the front was aimed only at Russia, which from the outset derogated from the obligations it had officially assumed

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<sup>13</sup> *Tezaurul Băncii Naționale a României la Moscova – Documente*, Foreword Ph.D. prof. Mugur Isărescu, Historical comment and edition by Cristioan Păunescu, Marian Ștefan, Editura Fundației Culturale Magazin Istoric, Bucharest, 1999, p. 87.

through the Military and Political Conventions of 1914 and 1916; the military disaster that came quickly after the war required quick decisions, the German-Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bucharest was imminent. The “Russia” option as a temporary shelter for the Treasury had, perhaps, as an alternative – except for the extremely short time available to the Romanian Government – only a solution such as “*Tismana*” from the 40’s, but which, then, had not been prepared at all in any way. Evacuation solutions in other countries, using sea or land transport, could not be considered given the German-Austro-Hungarian domination of these routs.

During the Second World War, the evolution of the military and political balance of forces in the direction of the Axis losing the war was predictable after Stalingrad. With the fragmented national territory, at the discretion of the German “ally”, without any other ally, with two neighbours whose revisionist appetite was far from being satisfied, the Romanian Government had little room for manoeuvre. We find out from the documents kept in the NBR archive that the attempts made by the Bank to evacuate its treasury in Switzerland or Turkey, “*could not give any satisfactory result*”<sup>14</sup>. Consequently, the Bank’s management, “*concerned with the safe preservation of gold, considered it necessary, in the face of circumstances, to move the gold shelter from the treasury in Bucharest to another region of the country.*” The Romanian Government approved this operation and the Bank “*received the agreement to build a security treasury at the Tismana monastery in Gorj County*”<sup>15</sup>. In absolute secrecy, all the necessary works were carried out to house the gold with the direct involvement of the General Staff of the Romanian Army, so that by the second decade of September 1944, NBR’s gold and 51 boxes of Polish gold were stored and insured at Tismana. The Soviet occupier, present in Romania since August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1944, did not find out anything about the operation that was taking place.<sup>16</sup>

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The all-encompassing Soviet occupation installed in Romania along with the “*liberation*” – not because the country was defeated in the war but because the great powers, USSR-US-Great Britain decided, taking into account their own interests and not the principles set out in international

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<sup>14</sup> *Tezaurul Băncii Naționale a României la Moscova*, p. 88 (Note of 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1944 addressed by the Governor of the NBR to Mihai Antonescu, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-97.

documents about “*rightfulness and justice*”, “*the rights of the peoples*”, “*the liberation of the occupied territories*”, etc., signed during the war years – had the most serious consequences, on all levels, on the Romanian society.

*Why, in the Churchill-Stalin transaction inscribed on the famous napkin, Romania, of all the states abandoned to the USSR, passes with the highest percentage in the Russian “interest” sphere?*

During this long period, as I said before, the *National History* has been mutilated with priority. The treasury, like all other chapters of Russian-related history, has been **closed** to knowledge and **forbidden** to research. Unappealable.

I note two turning points in the history of this Soviet-occupied country:

- ***The withdrawal of the Soviet army from the country in 1958;***
- ***The Declaration of April 1964*** – when the Sovroms, the ubiquitous Soviet advisers and many other instruments of the occupation were liquidated.

For reasons that I have never understood and accepted, there is not much talk about these two historical moments, much less about their positive consequences for the Romanian society. Or they are minimized, misinterpreting their meaning. Like the moment of August 1968.

Gradually, the openings have expanded into all areas, including the field of historical research. National history has begun to re-enter the natural rights of knowledge – but within the limits dictated by the nature of the existing political regime and the state of relations with the USSR.

In this context, the history of the Treasury has returned to the attention of historians; at the same time, the recovery of the Treasury entered the agenda of Romania’s relations – a “**socialist**” country – with the USSR – also a “**socialist**” country – but in the position of “**patron**”.

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had the initiative to try to open the discussion with the Soviet “comrades” on the issue of returning the Treasury. In circumstances still little studied and known, in **1956**, a small part of the Treasury was returned. The press release of the “Tass” news agency of 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1956 broadcasted the following title: the USSR “*decided to transfer to the government of People’s Republic of Romania historical values of Romanian applied, decorative and plastic art*”; in the years of the World War II, “*all Soviet archives and state values, including Romanian ones, were evacuated to regions of the country out of danger*”; “*at present, the*

*Romanian historical and artistic values that are preserved in the U.R.S.S. <sup>17</sup> have also been put in order, detected and systematized in **their entirety***” (emphasis added – V.M). The “Tass” communiqué stated, “*The Soviet people have carefully preserved all these works of art that are of great historical and artistic value. The U.R.S.S. Government and the Soviet people have always regarded these values as an inalienable good of the Romanian people itself.*”<sup>18</sup> Unlike the “Tass” agency, General Vedenin, the Kremlin commander, narrated George Oprescu, the head of the Romanian Commission invited to Moscow “to receive everything”, how the Romanian objects were “discovered”: the general had seen “accidentally”, in the church of the Holy Apostles, “some icons” that seemed to him not to be Russian and, “researching the situation”, he found out that they “are part of the treasury deposited by Romanians in 1916”; but “researching further into Kremlin’s basement, he came across the rest of the things deposited” (?!?). In the Foreword to the volume *Studies on the treasury returned by the USSR*<sup>19</sup>, acad. G. Oprescu reports that General Vedenin assured him that “the Soviet Government has decided that **everything entrusted to Russia in 1916 should be returned to Romania.**” In fact, acad. Oprescu reinforces Vedenin’s words by saying, “Our entire treasury remained intact... it had been carefully preserved by the Soviet Government and ...every work of art had been studied by a specialist, cleaned, and some paintings even restored.”

There is very serious misinformation in the information brought in the public space on the occasion of this restitution, both by the Soviet side and by the Romanian side. Here are some of them: what the Soviet Government returned in **1956** was part of the second shipment in July 1917, which included archaeological and church art values, paintings, coins, documents – all of which were *partially deposited in Kremlin*, but mainly at the Moscow House of Deposits and Consignments. The return had nothing to do with the BNR’s gold – which had been deposited in Kremlin’s Weapons Hall; **this**

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<sup>17</sup> Apud *Tezaurul României la Moscova. Documente (1916-1917). Selectate, adnotate și comentate de Viorica Moisuc, Ion Calafeteanu, Constantin Botoran.* Coordination and Introductory Study by Viorica Moisuc, Globus Publishing, Bucharest, 1993, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> The information contained in the press release of the Soviet news agency is vague and confusing. As will be seen below, they contradict the statements made by the Soviet leaders on the occasion of the first confrontation that took place in Moscow between Ceausescu and Brezhnev, a few years later.

<sup>19</sup> *Studii asupra tezaurului restituit de URSS*, Academiei R.P.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1958, p. 10. Apud *Tezaurul României la Moscova...*, pp. 11-13.



**was never returned.** Finally, acad. G. Oprescu states in writing that the entire treasury “remained intact” and that “**everything was returned today.**”<sup>20</sup> It is difficult to assume that George Oprescu was not aware at that time at least of Mihail Romașcanu’s book and collection of documents!<sup>21</sup> However, there was the official censorship and the party control.

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In the study that prefaced the volume *Romania and the Russian foreign policy. A century in the history of the Romanian Treasury “preserved” in Moscow. Study and documents*<sup>22</sup>, I was writing: “Nicolae Ceausescu was directly involved in the resumption by historians of the research on the issue of the Treasury confiscated by Russia, as well as on the history of Bessarabia. For this purpose, a large group of researchers from historical research institutes [the Institute of Historical and Socio-Political Studies, the Nicolae Iorga Institute, the Institute of Military History, the State Archives, the Institute of History A. D. Xenopol, the Academy of Economic Studies – ASE], to which all the funds of prohibited documents and publications were opened. In this way, several volumes of annotated and commented documents were made on the History of the Romanian Treasury evacuated to Moscow and confiscated by the Soviets, the History of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania,” and the series of volumes devoted to the topic *The Political-Territorial Status of Romanian until 1918*.

In the mid-1970s, the volume **Tezaurul României evacuat la Moscova 1916-1917** (232 p.) was printed in a small number (30) in the PCR printing house. Copies were numbered and sent to PCR senior management. The historians who compiled this volume were Viorica Moisuc (coordinator), Constantin Botoran, Ion Calafeteanu, Eliza Campus, Iulian Hațieganu<sup>23</sup>. Copies of documents in the Archives of the National Bank of Romania (official documents signed by the Romanian and Russian Plenipotentiaries),

<sup>20</sup> Apud *Tezaurul României la Moscova...*, p. 11. About the contents of the 1956 restitution see pp. 12-15.

<sup>21</sup> Mihail G. Romașcanu, *Tezaurul român de la Moscova*, Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1924.

<sup>22</sup> Viorica Moisuc, *Românii și politica externă rusească. Studiu și Documente*, Casa Editorială Demiurg, Iași, 2013, pp. 15-27. N.B.: excerpts from this study are included in this study so as not to repeat a whole series of information but also value judgments that I do not intend to change; what I added I pointed out in square brackets.

<sup>23</sup> Iulian Hațieganu, Eliza Campus and Constantin Botoran, colleagues, and friends, left us a long time ago.

*documents from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [notes, telegrams, diplomatic reports, minutes, memoirs, documents regarding the operations prior to dispatch, the execution of the two transports – December 1916, July 1917 – on the route Iasi-Chisinau-Ungheni-Odessa-Moscow, the action of depositing in Kremlin and inventorying the contents of the crates containing the NBR's gold stock, the minutes concluded on this occasion, documents regarding the confiscation of the Treasury, the arrest of the personnel of the Romanian legation in Petrograd and the unilateral rupture of the diplomatic relations with Romania on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1918, etc.] were included in the volume; in addition to the shortcomings, some documents published after the war by Mihail Romașcanu were included in this volume.*

The documentation on these issues subsumed to the history of the Treasury was echoed in the public space within certain limits, more in the university, intellectual world, but also abroad by the participation of Romanian historians in various international scientific events; however, it was used in the action of the country's governing bodies in relations with the USSR on the issue of the return of the Treasury; but, the cantonment of Soviet concern in matters of a territorial nature unrelated to the issue of the Treasury – the *“Romanian occupation” of Bessarabia, the damage caused by the Romanian army in the occupied areas during the years of World War II, etc.* – drowned in this avalanche of issues the real and permanently current issue of **the return of the Treasury** – which has fallen into a kind of *“derisory”*. We specify in the above-mentioned study – during the talks in Moscow between Nicolae Ceausescu and Leonid Brezhnev, *“the latter proposed that ‘the problem be closed’, because it is a matter of history, and there are no more current problems between the two countries that need to be solved. Ceausescu opposed it, agreeing only to interrupt the talks for the time being, but ‘the issue must remain open’. Due to this position of the Romanian leader, the issue of the restitution of the Treasury has remained present in the Romanian-Soviet and then Romanian-Russian relations, until today.”* The leader of the RCP, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, a member of the delegation that had these very tense discussions with Brezhnev, recounted in detail in his memoirs the meeting and confrontations in Moscow.<sup>24</sup>

***The treasury will be returned “in the hands of the Romanian people” – it is written in black and white in the Declaration of severance of diplomatic relations with Romania, signed by Lenin on January 13/26, 1918.***

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Niculescu-Mizil, *O istorie trăită*, vol. I-II, Enciclopedică Publishing, Bucharest, 1997, 2nd edition, completed and revised, 2002.

*If even during the regime patronized by the USSR, the Romanian people were not able to receive back the property confiscated in 1918, then... when?*

A remembrance, even a brief one, of those discussed in Moscow in **1965**, during the visit of the RCP delegation led by Nicolae Ceausescu<sup>25</sup>, on **September 3-11** – as it appears from the *transcript of these discussions kept in the CC Archive of RCP, Chancellery Fund, file 124/1965, published by the historians Petre Otu and Ștefan Marian in “Magazin istoric” no. 9-10, also published (excerpts strictly referring to the issue of the Treasury) in the volume Tezaurul Băncii Naționale a României la Moscova (pp. 72-85), mentioned in other papers as well –*, is useful for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue that occupies one hundred and twenty-five years the agenda of Romanian-Russian relations, but also for understanding the situation in the years that followed.

**“We say: give us back what belongs to us, you say: we do not have to!”**

The discussions were tense, the Romanian side proved with documents the motivation of the request for the return of the treasury, the Soviets arguing the refusal with theoretical speculations, with false information.

Thus, **Alexandru Bârlădeanu** began by sketching a short history of the problem, avoiding issues related to the abandonment of the Romanian ally by the Russian army – a situation that fully contributed to the fall of Bucharest under the German-Austro-Hungarian occupation, having as consequences among others the evacuation of the Treasury in Russia: *“During the First World War, when part of the Romanian territory was occupied by German troops, an agreement was reached in which, in order to be safe and to avoid a possible fall into German hands, the gold treasury and other values of our national economy as well as the values belonging to the Romanian House of Savings and Consignments were to be stored in Russia. As a result of this agreement, in **December 1916**, a number of 1,738 boxes containing almost the entire gold treasury of the National Bank of Romania as well as two boxes with the jewels of the Royal House were shipped to Moscow. All the boxes were stored in Kremlin, in a compartment reserved for*

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<sup>25</sup> The delegation included Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Alexandru Bârlădeanu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Manea Mănescu, Corneliu Mănescu and others; the Soviet side was represented by Leonid Brezhnev, A.N. Kosagin, I.V. Andropov, A.A. Gromâko, N.V. Novikov and others.

*the State Bank of Romania, here, in the Weapons Hall. In July 1917, a second transport was carried out containing 188 boxes with the rest of the gold treasury and other values of the House of Savings and Consignments...* Details were given regarding the total value of the Treasury, its content, existing data in the documents published both by Romașcanu in the mentioned volume and in the specialized literature of the time. Continuing his presentation, Bârlădeanu referred, with exact data, to the restitutions from 1935 and 1956: *“Twice, in 1935, after the revival of the diplomatic relations, and in 1956, some of these deposited boxes were returned to us, containing archives, historical documents, works of art,...but the gold treasury of the National Bank was not returned, which represented the coverage of the national currency and a great wealth of the Romanian people.”*<sup>26</sup> At the end of his demonstration, A. Bârlădeanu formulated the conclusion: *“Today, ...we raise before you the issue of returning this gold deposit to its true owner – the Romanian people. We consider that this restitution... it also has a special political significance in that it accomplishes what Lenin still believes must be done...”* (emphasis added – V.M.).

In his reply, Brezhnev outlined Russia's position – the same, supported by Russian historians and politicians before and after the break-up of the Soviet bloc – on the issue of the Romanian Treasury confiscated in 1918, a problem he artificially and unjustifiably combined, neither legally, nor politically, nor morally, with Russian territorial and financial claims (“debts” imposed on Romania), issues unrelated to Russia's obligation to return to Romania its Treasury in full, as stated in the signed documents by Russian officials repeatedly in 1916, 1917, 1918: *“This issue has been around for 50 years,”* said Brezhnev, *and refers to the expenses between tsarist Russia and royal Romania... After 50 years, suddenly, two socialist countries begin to remember the relations between the tsarist government and the royal government. We were astonished by the very introduction of the issue... What does the issue look like for us? It is clear from the existing material that in December 1916 an unknown representative, a not very representative figure – this action took place when the Germans occupied your country and presented a great danger –, allegedly, transmitted to the Command of the Southwest Front ... these treasure boxes... they were transmitted on trust... What happened next? Tsarism has been removed and all these boxes have fallen into the hands of the interim government. This is where the information ends,”* Brezhnev said. *We can't find any more data*

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<sup>26</sup> Apud *Tezaurul Băncii Naționale a României*, pp. 72-74.

from any commission because the civil war started and then some of the gold was sent to ...Perm, Omsk, Kazan, Saratov..." However, the Soviet leader still gives some "information": during the Civil War, some of this gold **"has been robbed by white-guards."** The conclusion: **"There is no clear situation in the archives. When Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej and you raised the issue of returning this treasury, I returned these boxes for which complete lists existed"** (emphasis added – V.M.).

The data mentioned by Brezhnev are false, 1) the boxes containing the Romanian treasury **"fell into the hands of the interim government"**; 2) part of the gold **has been robbed by white-guards**; 3) **the gold boxes "for which complete lists existed" were returned**; 4) **the treasury was sent to Russia "on trust"**; 5) **"a unknown sent to the commander of the Southwest Front... these boxes containing the treasury..."**

Because the documents of the period after the February Revolution regarding the Treasury – documents from the Romanian archives – are published and can be consulted in any library, I review only the main data that refute Brezhnev's statements: **February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1917, Moscow – Protocol concluded with the occasion of the submission to Kremlin of the Romanian Treasury – values of the National Bank (first transport)** written in Russian and French, signed by delegates of the Ministry of Finance of Russia, the Russian State Bank and NBR's delegates; *The Memorandum* of the BNR's representative, Vasilescu, regarding the transport of the Treasury from Iasi to Moscow and the detailed inventory of **the 1,737 boxes – 13 823 bags containing gold coins and bullions**<sup>27</sup>. **All these values were deposited in the reserved compartment in Kremlin's Weapons Hall; document dated May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1917, Moscow, letter from the NBR's representative in Moscow, M. Demetrescu addressed to the Governor of the NBR informing him that: "On Tuesday, May 23, 1917, at 11 a.m., accompanying Mr. Director T. Capitanovici, they were at the Kremlin where, in the presence of Mr. Kowalnitzki, the guarantor of the State Bank in Moscow, Weniaminoff, the director of the Moscow branch of the State Bank, Yakovleff, deputy director, and Mandrowski, secretary, they inspected the National Bank's treasury, where we found the 1,738 boxes of various gold coins, as well as 2 PR boxes [Queen Maria's jewellery], a total of 1,740 boxes that make up the entire stored National Bank's treasury"**<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> *Tezaurul României la Moscova...*, doc. no. 12, 13, 14, 15, pp. 42-57.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. no. 17, pp. 61-62.

The mentioned documents are in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania and the NBR's Archive.

In preparation for the departure of the second transport to Russia, we find a rich diplomatic correspondence even with the **Interim Government** on its conditions and content. **On July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1917**, in a letter to Finance Minister Nicolae Titulescu, Poklewsky-Koziell – Russia's Minister in Romania – announced **that the Russian government had granted him "full powers necessary to sign the Protocols on the evacuation in Russia of the securities belonging to the National Bank and other public institutions in Romania"**<sup>29</sup>, which was done on the same day, **July 27<sup>th</sup>**, when, in Iasi, **the Protocol** was signed by the Russian Minister, Titulescu and the representatives of the NBR, **on the occasion of the departure of the second transport to Russia**<sup>30</sup>. This transport, guarded by Cossack troops, arrived in Moscow on **August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1917**, and was deposited at Kremlin in the Weapons Hall in the same compartment where the first transport had been deposited. An inventory was made – dated **August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1917** – of the contents of this transport, signed by representatives of the two parties.<sup>31</sup>

An interesting and as accurate as possible document in the BNR Archive, regarding the **"verification of the treasury's situation (first transport) deposited in Moscow"**, dated **August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1917**, report sent from Moscow to the NBR's governor by censors C. Nacu and N.C. Constantinescu, states that all the crates deposited in January 1917 were intact.<sup>32</sup>

This is the **latest information** known so far from Romanian archive sources regarding the situation of the Romanian treasury deposited in the Kremlin. So, during the **interim government**, when the second transport of the Romanian values took place (BNR and House of Deposits and Consignments and other institutions), the negotiations took place with representatives empowered by that government and on **August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1917**, the last inspection made by the representatives of the NBR attest to the complete security of the values deposited in the Kremlin.

It follows only from these few documents that the information circulated by Brezhnev in 1965, which, in fact, **resumed and developed** the **"arguments"** supported by Russian diplomats in the so-called Romanian-

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 21, p. 65.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 22, pp. 66-67 and doc. no. 23, pp. 68-70

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 24, 25, pp. 70-73 (documents from the Archive of The Romanian MFA).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 26, p. 74.

Russian negotiations of the 1920s and **remained unchanged in the fake inventory used by Russian historians and politicians from then until today, are specially tailored to “argue” the refusal to return the Treasury to the “rightful owner”**. As can be seen, the signatures of the Russian officials as well as the commitments not only of the governments of the Russian Empire, of the “interim” government but also of the Soviet Power, even the signature of the “father” of the October 1917 revolution, **V.I. Lenin**, on an official international act, have no value and are not taken into account – **not** by foreigners, but by the Russians themselves, if it is all about an **unjustifiable** seizure of material goods and territories.

The NBR archive as well reveals the situation from the next period, recorded by its representatives in Moscow in charge of supervising the situation of the Treasury.

In **December 1917**, *T. Capitanovici*, director of the National Bank, reported from Moscow to the Governor on **the situation of the Treasury after the October Revolution**:

*“On October 28<sup>th</sup>, a street movement began here that degenerated into a civil war and lasted uninterruptedly until 3<sup>th</sup> of November. The centre of these battles was the Metropol Hotel, where we lived, located near the local City Hall (Duma). For six days, we were bombed day and night; the hotel had started to collapse and even in some parts it caught fire. We, together with the other passengers, were locked in the cellars of the Hotel, where we stayed without being able to sleep and as food we had two baked potatoes per person. Our rooms were opened, the chests were broken and money, valuables, clothes, etc. were stolen and destroyed, the last remnants that we could still escape from the disaster in Bucharest. As the hotel could no longer be accommodated, we were taken by Mr. Guerin<sup>33</sup>... a real providence for the Romanians in Moscow, who found us a room in the houses where he lives... The next day, **November 5<sup>th</sup>**, I was able to get the **first information about our treasury in the Kremlin**, where great artillery fighting had taken place, and we were assured that our deposit was still in good condition but had no one to contact to ensure its preservation in the future. The situation was immediately telegraphed to the government. **To this day, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1917, nothing abnormal; the treasury is intact, the entrances have been checked and the doors and seals have been found intact**. However, I refused to ask for it to be opened in order to check the interior, so as not to attract the attention of the guard and especially of the Red Guard, advised by the former State Bank guarantor, Mr. **Kowalnitzky**,*

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<sup>33</sup> Honorary Consul of Romania in Moscow.

who was replaced after he **was arrested** for several days for **refusing to hand over the keys to his bank's treasury**. The situation continues to be very difficult and insecure, an impossible atmosphere, **I do not know what will happen to our deposits or to us**. No action can be taken now, but as soon as things calm down – if they can calm down – I think **the treasury in Moscow will be lifted and brought, if not in the country, elsewhere, taking the agreement with the friendly powers and especially with America.**” Capitanovici then announced the arrival of a group of 19 people in Moscow<sup>34</sup> for guarding the treasury but, under the conditions existing then, they were to be used to guard the BNR printing house operating in Moscow (“where we have great values”) printing bank notes. Capitanovici announces the Governor that on his departure from Moscow he will entrust the keys of the Kremlin Compartment where the BNR Treasury was stored to the engineer Dobrovich who remained in Moscow.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, **on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1917, in the midst of the revolution, the treasury was still intact**, according to indirect information received by the director Capitanovici.

Given the uncertain situation after the events of October, the diplomatic action was initiated in Iasi in order to move the Treasury elsewhere. The telegraph correspondence was long overdue, in Paris as well as in Petrograd and Iasi, the provisions crossed roads, and in Russia, the situation deteriorated rapidly.

The attempts of the Romanian Government to gain Allied support for transporting the treasury from Moscow elsewhere have been belated, with events in Russia far ahead of these rather cumbersome negotiations. However, none of the Allies, including America, was willing to engage in this complicated and risky action.<sup>36</sup>

Following the events, we find that all of Brezhnev's speculations about the fate of the Treasury deposited in the Kremlin (its appropriation by the *interim government*, *white-guards*, etc.) are blown up by **the first force of the Soviet power, on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1918** when Romania's fortune is simply confiscated; the printing house of the National Bank and all the printed bank notes were also confiscated, in a total of 40,000,000 lei, as well as the values

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<sup>34</sup> It was, in fact, a group of gendarmes armed (in civilian clothes) with the task of discreetly monitoring the Kremlin depots. The mission was not carried out because no one could enter the Palace without special permission issued by the Soviet authorities.

<sup>35</sup> *Cited work*, doc. no, 27, pp. 75-76.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, doc no. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 , 47, 48, pp. 108-113, 116-118.



and titles of the private banks and of the House of Deposits. *“National Bank’s materials and clichés were also seized.”*<sup>37</sup>

Those who were the first to attack the Romanian Treasury **were neither the interim government nor the white-guards. It was the Soviet Power**; in order to implement the decision of confiscation, on **February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1918**, the **French consul in Moscow who has received in storage – after the rupture of the relations between Soviet Russia and Romania – the archive of the Romanian Consulate, the documents relating to the Romanian Treasury deposited in the Kremlin and in the Russian Deposit and Consumption House in Moscow**, as well as the keys to the Weapons Hall Compartment where the Treasury had been deposited and those from the Sudnaia Kassa, *“received a formal request, on behalf of the Soviet Government to hand over the keys to the Treasury to the Moscow Commissioner for Foreign Affairs”*. *The French Consul – we read in the Minutes of the report concluded by the French Consul in Moscow, Eirick Labonne, dated March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918 and sent to the Romanian Government in Iasi – explained to the Commissioner that in his capacity as representative of Romanian interests and responsible for a deposit of goods belonging to the Romanian Government, he could not consent to this transfer.”* But the confrontation did not end there: *The foreign commissioner said at the time that the values belonging to the Romanian Government, by the Decision of the People’s Commissars of Petrograd, had been simply confiscated by virtue of the state of war commissioners and he demands, if need be, even by force, the surrender of the keys.”*<sup>38</sup> The categorical refusal of the Consul E. Labonne changed the position of the Soviets, **not** on the basis of the problem but on the way it was expressed. By letter no. 7595 addressed by the same unreasonable commissioner to Consul Labonne, it is said: *“Mr. Consul, I hereby have the honour to ask you to give me the keys to the deposit room, which contains the values of the Romanian state, to take*

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, doc no. 49 , p. 117 : the telegram of the honorary consul Guérin sent to the Romanian Government in Iasi through the French Consulate in Moscow, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1918. According to Prof. C.I. Băicoianu, the printing house of the Bank (later of engineer Dobrovici) had printed bank notes in the total amount of 141,530,000 lei. Some of these bank notes were deposited in boxes that were deposited next to the values of the House of Deposits, at Sudnaia Kasa in Moscow (C.I. Băicoianu, *Istoria politicii noastre monetare*, vol III, pp. 153-154 and 215-216. Apud *Tezaurul României la Moscova...* p. 117, note 54).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 51, p. 119. MAE Archive, fond 71/ 1914, part I, vol. 183, pp. 84-85. Apud *Tezaurul României la Moscova....*, p. 117.

*from there the boxes deposited in due course by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in Moscow, and I believe I must assure you that the values of the Romanian state deposited there will remain untouched in accordance with the minutes you have.*"<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that when the boxes with NBR's values were deposited in the Kremlin in **December 1916 - January 1917, there was no People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and the official documents drawn up by Romanians and Russians on the occasion of the inventory made then, but on other occasions as well, does not mention the existence of any box of Russian goods in the known compartment.**<sup>40</sup>

So, the lies are starting to pile up, I will record them below.

The French did not give in the French ambassador to Petrograd, Noulens, asked Labonne as early as **January 24 / February 6**, to make "an approach to the People's Commissars to signal that this treasury is under the guarantee of the Entente's powers". Noulens told Labonne, "From this moment on, I have officially warned the People's Commissars about the special rights that France and certain governments have over the Romanian treasury." As a result, Consul Labonne made the request to the Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) in the form of **a verbal note read to Fritsche**, the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs<sup>41</sup>, the English consul being also present in Moscow. Things did not stop there. On **March 8/21, 1918**, following the strong pressure, Fritsche, claiming that "**the state of war between Romania and Russia gave him the right to confiscate Romanian property in Russia, formally maintained the request to be hand over the keys.**" In the presence of the consuls of England and America, Labonne drafted a *Protocol* specifying the situation created. Until the next day, Fritsche picked up the "claimed" boxes from the Treasury and then returned the keys to the French consul. However, the Soviet side continued to make claims on the Romanian deposit. **There is no report on the goods seized by the Russians from the compartment of the Romanian treasury, or other explanatory documents. Practically, from that moment on, the Romanian side or its intermediaries did not have any control over the assets deposited in Moscow.**

However, Fritsche "*worked*" in the compartment in the Weapons Hall that housed the Romanian gold, to take the crates "*placed there by the Soviet authorities*", **a day and a night**, after which he returned the keys. But,

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 52, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 53, pp. 121-123. See also note 57, p. 120 and note 65, p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118, note 55.

even after more than a century, the truth still comes to light. Revealing documents (unknown – it seems – not even by Russian-Soviet historians, much less by Russian politicians) have been preserved in *the State Archives of the Russian Federation*.

An *Information coming from the State Treasury of RSFSR*, dated February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1921, having no. 1676, referring to the **Romanian Treasury**, states that “On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918, 16 boxes of Romanian banknotes totalling 13,345,000 lei were seized by Commissioner Vladimir Maximovici Frice. Fritsche’s action is referred to as well in *the Address of the State Treasury of May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1921, no. 2293, to the Deputy Commissioner for Finance Alski, an existing document in the Russian State Archive for Socio-Political History*.<sup>42</sup>

Returning to the avalanche of lies on which the so-called “**right**” of the Soviets to dispose of the existing Romanian fortunes in Russia was built.

1. Throughout 1917, when the “*interim government*” was in power in Russia – the creation of the revolution of February 1917 –, the operation of evacuating the Treasury, of other artistic, archaeological, church, etc. assets, of the House of Savings and Consignments, of the banks and other private institutions, continued unabated, under the conditions organized by the two parties, on the basis of official documents – agreements signed by their proxies.

2. During this period there was no attempt by the white-guards to steal the Romanian treasure, neither during the transport by train nor later.

3. The first attack on the treasury belonged to the Soviet Power – **January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1918**.

4. **The state of war does not give any right to the aggressor over the goods of the attacked party. At the same time, it should be emphasized that in 1917-1918, Romania and Russia were formally allies in the coalition of Allied and Associated Powers and not “at war”**. Indeed, many centuries ago, even millennia ago, the conqueror had the (unwritten) “right” to appropriate, after victory, everything he wanted, to rob, to kill, to set on fire, to dispose as he wished of the goods and lives of those defeated.

5. **In January 1918, there was no state of war between Russia and Romania**, neither declared, nor undeclared. However, Russia’s aggression against Romania was obvious, the subject being in fact **Bessarabia**, which begun the self-determination process on **December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1917**, proclaiming its independence on **January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1918** – acts announcing the Union with Romania. It was another element to consider by the Soviet power in its

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<sup>42</sup> Apud Ilie Schipor, *Destinul tezaurului României – Argumente din arhivele ruse*, doc. no. 60, 63, pp. 215-216, 220-221.

relation to Romania. The Romanian military victories in the summer of 1917 did not bode well for the evolution of the relations of the new Power in Russia with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Hence, the attempts to overthrow the Romanian political regime (Roșal episode, December 1917), the betrayal of the Russian army on the entire Eastern Front, the robbery and rioting unleashed in Moldova by the million rebellious Russians (thrown across the border by the Romanian army), the ultimate pressures for the acceptance by the Romanian Government of a separate peace with the Centrals and many others.

It should be noted that always, any event cannot be neither researched nor understood if it is not placed in the context in which it took place. *It is an axiom of historical research.* In this case, the coincidence of the dates of the events must be carefully observed.

Returning to the Romanian-Soviet negotiations of 1965.

To Brezhnev, **Ion Gh. Maurer** opposed the plea of truth with the clear statement: ***"I have proposed a simple solution: the restitution of the Treasury. This solution clearly results from the acts concluded between the leadership of the Kingdom of Romania and the Russian tsarist government of that time. But it also results from the clear commitments of the Soviet side, whom, by a decision of the Council of People's Commissars, pledged to hold this gold stock deposited by Romania and to return it to the Romanian people. I have considered that both you and us will agree with the fact that, at the moment, the Romanian people is the one exercising political power in our country and that therefore, in accordance with these commitments assumed by the Soviet Power, by the Decision of the People's Commissars of January 13 / 26, 1918, the Treasury must be returned to the Romanian people. ...I have proposed a very important political solution because, first of all, it results from the very clear commitments of the Soviet side."***

Referring then to Brezhnev's conclusions and quoting the proposed "solution" to "closing this problem", Maurer states without reservation: ***"This is not our point of view. We have opened the problem, the problem remains open... "We say: give us back what belongs to us, you say: we do not have to. But we do not agree with closing the issue; the issue must remain open, we did not agree today, we will discuss tomorrow, and we will have to agree on this chapter, in accordance with the commitments made..."***<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Apud Tezaurul Băncii Naționale a României la Moscova, p. 78.

The toughest confrontation between **Nicolae Ceausescu** and **Brezhnev** followed. The Romanian leader began by reading the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of 13/26 of January 1918, emphasizing the responsibilities voluntarily assumed by the Soviet Power, namely, **the intangibility of the Treasury, its preservation, its restitution "in the hands of the Romanian people"**. "So, we are not just talking about an agreement between two governments that have been overthrown by the revolution. **It is about** – said Ceausescu – **a public commitment of the Soviet Power... We addressed the Soviet Power with the request to respect its commitment made in 1918. You answered: we cannot give it.**" And he continued: "We say openly that we cannot share the considerations set forth by Comrade Brezhnev – they are not substantiated either from a legal point of view or from other points of view." He cites Romania as an example of correctness, which, during the 1939 invasion of Poland, received and housed part of the Polish gold and **returned it in full after the war**, then invited the interlocutors to "reflect" – an issue that Brezhnev did not comment upon. In obvious confusion, the Soviet leader turns the issue upside down and claims that, in fact, in 1956, "what was kept here in the Kremlin has been completely returned to you," echoing the false assertion that, after the Supreme Soviet decision of January 13/26, 1918 "this treasury was robbed by the white-guards, which – Brezhnev argued with false innocence – **absolves to some extent the Soviet Power of responsibility**", after which he crossed the t's: "**We have come to the conclusion that we consider this problem buried starting from to the idea of our brotherly collaboration.**"<sup>44</sup> (emphasis added – V.M.)

The issue of so-called "mutual settlements" raised by the Soviet side provoked a harsh exchange of remarks with the Romanians. "We are not raising this issue," Ceausescu said. *We have raised a simple thing: an agreement was reached between two governments signed by the then finance ministers; these values were given for storage; **they were not given as collateral on account of some debts. According to all international and domestic regulations, if you let someone keep something, they are obliged to return it to you. The Council of People's Commissars – of which, as I recall, Lenin was a member – considered that it must assume its responsibility to preserve and return these values to the Romanian people, adopting a special decision in this regard. This is a proof of observing the international law, the right of another people because, as it is said here, this treasury belongs to the Romanian people... We are only raising the***

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 80-81.

*issue of making a restitution of what has been deposited, and what the Soviet power has said it will give back to the Romanian people. **We do not understand why we should raise the issue of settlements. We do not understand why we should link this issue to the problems of the Second World War.***"<sup>45</sup>

By abruptly raising the issue of so-called “settlements”, the Soviet leaders sought to show that Romania’s debt to Russia-USSR would far exceed the value of the claimed treasury and that non-acceptance of “expenses” would lead to great inconveniences for Romania, the balance of those “debts” being clearly unfavourable to Romania. There were disguised threats meant to determine the Romanian side to renounce its rightful claims. “What can we understand when it is said that this can lead to very unpleasant things with serious consequences? Serious for whom? Serious consequences can only be for those who exist today, that is, for the Romanian people, not for those who no longer exist!” Ceausescu replied. Regarding the so-called “settlements”, he stated: “What we want to ask of you is that in discussing this issue, and, in general, any problems that may arise, we should not link issues that have nothing in common, because they cannot be interpreted, Comrade Brezhnev, except as **attempts to prevent us from raising again the issue of the return of the treasury. This cannot be a basis for the development of our relations.**”

The harsh exchange of Brezhnev-Ceausescu-Kosagin remarks on the issues of treasury restitution – the “settlements”, the “burying” of the treasury issue, the insistent request of the Soviet side to permanently remove this issue from the agenda of Romanian-Soviet relations, ended with the conclusion formulated by Ceausescu: “**We realize that the problem cannot be clarified now. We agree to postpone it... It has to find a solution.**”<sup>46</sup>

Thus, from 1965 until today, **the issue of the Romanian Treasury confiscated by Soviet Russia on January 13/26, 1918, and not returned, has remained open. And one more finding. What was said in Moscow on September 3-11, 1965, in support of the request for the return of the confiscated treasury has not been repeated since then and until today.**

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I was writing, in 1993, in the *Introduction* to the mentioned volume, published then: “*Made more than 18 years ago, it remained unpublished*

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

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

for easy-to-understand reasons. The discovery of the documents, their corroboration with information from various sources reveals an amazing page of history... What was sent to Moscow in 1916-1917 was a huge fortune, all that was most precious to Romania then – and its territory included only Oltenia, Muntenia, Dobrogea and Moldova to the Prut, without Bukovina –, starting with the entire National Bank treasury, Queen Maria's jewellery, the goods of the House of Deposits and Consignments, the immeasurable fortunes of art and antiquity museums, churches and monasteries, the values of the Romanian Academy and the State Archives, the State Art Gallery, other public and private institutions, as well as private individuals. Undoubtedly, the haste in which all these fortunes were gathered to be packed and sent to Iasi and from there, loaded in dozens and dozens of wagons, to Moscow, was one of the reasons why a relatively correct inventory and assessment, therefore a complete record of them, does not exist. Secondly, the pilgrimages of papers during the years of occupation (Bucharest - Iasi - Bucharest) with the relocation of state institutions, central administration, government, etc., led, of course, to the loss of records, minutes, inventories (originals or copies); finally, the post-war administrative reorganizations, in turn, had negative consequences for the bureaucracy, so that, again, the packages of documents – minutes, letters, telegrams, memoirs, records, lists, etc. – regarding the history of the evacuation of the Treasury, suffered serious losses.”

Here are the calculations made in **1990** regarding the total amount of gold sent to Moscow, calculations made by the wisest specialists of the time: I specify that in the work of Mihail Romaşcanu – **the only one published until 1993** – there is no updated assessment (1924) of the lost treasury. Here are these calculations as I recorded them in **1993**, page 6 of the volume published at the time: “The value of the gold treasury evacuated to the Kremlin, belonging only to the National Bank of Romania, has been **estimated at 314,580,456.84 gold-lei, treasury consisting of bullions, different coins, and medals; to this Queen Maria's jewellery is added, estimated at 7,000,000 gold-lei.**

To give us some idea of the value – at today's level (1990) of this treasury, we made the following calculation: given that the parity (content) in fine gold of a gold-lei in that period [1916-1917] was 0.29032258 g fine gold, in accordance with the provisions of the Law for the establishment of a new monetary system of March 29 / April 11, 1867, valid in 1916, it results the amount of **93.36206 tons of fine gold, equal to 3,001,657.70 ounces. At the level of 1990, one ounce of fine gold was valued at about US \$ 400.**

*Thus, the current value [1990] of the 93,36206 tons of fine gold in the treasury would be **US \$ 1,200,663,081.56.***"

I insert here the footnote from p. 6, explanatory: *"Here is the calculation confirmed by specialists from BRCE [Romanian Foreign Trade Bank], whom I thank in this way for the support provided:  $321,580,456 \times 0,29033258: 1,000,000 = 93,36206 \text{ tons of fine gold} \times 32,150.72 = 3,001,657.70 \text{ ounces} \times \$ 400 = \$ 1,200,663,081.56$ ".*

In 1993, when I have published the volume of documents containing these considerations, I have also made some reservations as follows: *"However, the figures are far from reflecting the reality, because the NBR's treasury was mostly composed of gold coins – Napoleons, Ottoman pounds, Austrian crowns, pounds sterling, etc. and medals, or their value is **not calculated in gold-weight**. From 1916 until today [1990], the value of gold coins and medals has greatly increased. For example, in 1916, a one-pound gold coin was worth \$ 4.8; today [1990], the same currency is quoted at US \$ 100. As the NBR's treasury in Moscow contained 88,000 gold pounds, they are now worth US \$ 8,800,000. That is why we can only have a relative image in figures of the value of the NBR's thesaurry, a treasury that constitutes only a part of the evacuated assets."*

**These are the figures put into circulation through the work *Tezaurul României la Moscova. Documente 1916-1917*, published in 1993 in Bucharest, Globus Publishing House.**

The subsequent papers poached these figures with reference to either the volume published in 1993 or the one published in 2013. I mention: *Tezaurul Băncii Naționale a României la Moscova – Documente*, Foreword by Ph.D. prof. Mugur Isărescu. Historic comment and edition by Cristian Păunescu, Marian Ștefan, Historical Magazine Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999; Ioan Scurtu, *Tezaurul României la Moscova. Note și mărturii despre activitatea Comisiei Comune româno-ruse (2004 – 2012)*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014. Pavel Țugui published a very interesting study on the first attempt to approach the "restitution" of the Treasury made by Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, followed by the act of **1956** of returning a small part of the values deposited by Romania in Russia in 1917 (second transport): "Hrușcirov, Gheorghiu-Dej și Tezaurul României la Moscova. Anii 1955-1956 (I)," in *Culture*, weekly edited by the Romanian Cultural Foundation, year VIII, no. 26 (430), pp. 18-21 and the continuation in no. 27 (431), August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, pp. 16-18.

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The 1990s brought radical changes to the political physiognomy of the “Soviet bloc.” The USSR no longer exists, and Russia affirms democratic principles in its domestic and foreign policy. Theoretically, **the problem** of Bessarabia would no longer exist either; the **independent and sovereign state The Republic of Moldova** unreservedly expresses its European option and belonging to the Romanian historical-cultural-linguistic space. *“The Trojan Horse”* called *Transnistria* and the *sine die* settlement of the 14<sup>th</sup> Russian Army on the territory of a foreign state, Moscow’s disregard of all international decisions regarding *the liberation of the Republic of Moldova, the perpetuation of the Russian political-military outpost on Transnistrian territory, announces plans of imperial origin aiming the presence and the control in a territory that no longer belongs to it.*

**The legacy left** by the Soviet empire to **Ukraine** – the northern half of **Romanian Bukovina** – falls into another sphere of concern and problems but it concerns the entire Romanian nation left under foreign **occupation**, even if the term is no longer used in diplomatic and political vocabulary in the area. The phrase *“minorities rights”* has a mutilated meaning for the native Romanians in that part of the Romanian country traded almost a century ago by the two dictators – Hitler and Stalin – who set Europe on fire.

How is the approach to the issue of the Romanian Treasury outlined in the new political situation? From the side of the European Union? From the Russian side? From the Romanian side?

There are three major problems to which clear and definitive answers cannot be given. At least from a historian. Because, as “comrade” Brezhnev said in 1965, we are dealing with a *“political problem”* that does not belong to the brotherhood of historians.

I. Territorial issues between Romania and Russia, more precisely *the obstinate claim of Bessarabia* present in the Romanian-Soviet discussions from the pre-war period, have disappeared in June **1940**, following the Soviet aggression against Romania; subsequently, the secret or less secret agreements between the new allies – the USSR, the USA, Great Britain – during the war years perpetuated – through the peace treaty of **1947** – the provisions of the ultimatum aggressively imposed on Romania in 1940.

**The issue of the Treasury** was no longer intertwined with that of the possession of Bessarabia. However, the aberrant issue of “expenses” remained.

But *“both the Romanian treasury and other values, whose fate underwent changes during the years of the Second World War, have become issues of international interest entering the attention of the European*

*Union.*<sup>47</sup> In 1995, Romania has initiated a Resolution draft followed by Motion no. 7356/2 July 1995; *its discussion at the level of experts was rejected by Russia, the reason invoked being the existence in the Duma debate of a bill providing for the return of material goods of other states, deposited in the USSR during the war.* It was unfortunate that *the Russian State Duma rejected the plan to return those goods*; the result is known – nothing has changed.<sup>48</sup>

*The Committee for Culture, Education and Science of the European Commission* has drawn up a report stating that in the years of the First World War Romania sent to Moscow for safekeeping values which belonged to it, and which must be returned to it. After all, who expected an EC's *recommendation* to be considered by Moscow?<sup>49</sup>

Romania has the status of a full member of the European Union and a member of NATO. Russia **does not**; it has only **one status**: that of *great power* and it assumes its "*rights*" accordingly. Treaties, principles, obligations, commitments, international morality – these have a special meaning for Russia. In the interwar period, the USSR did not consider, as I mentioned, the decisions of the international community regarding the Romanian Treasury, it did not respect its own signatures on international treaties on peace and general security, why would it do it now?

II. *The Treaty of Cooperation, Good Neighbourly Relations and Friendship* between Romania and the USSR signed by Presidents Ion Iliescu and Mikhail Gorbachev on *April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1991* (after its initialling by Foreign Ministers Adrian Nastase and Alexandr Besmertny on March 20<sup>th</sup>) has also addressed the issue of the Treasury; Gorbachev repeated the old *unawareness* "excuse", promising, like his predecessors, that "*he will look into it.*" The Moscow putsch in August 1991 has led to the disappearance of the title "**USSR**" but has not brought anything new to the so-called "*outstanding problems*". The new Moscow administration, which claims to be democratic, has condemned the Hitler-Stalin pact of August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, but set aside its **consequences**, many and heavy, even after nearly a century from their accomplishment.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See Viorica Moisuc, *Romania's Treasure evacuated in Moscow in 1916 and confiscated by the Soviets – a Present International Problem*, Augusta Publishing House, Timișoara, 2001, chapters VII–VIII.

<sup>48</sup> Apud Viorica Moisuc, *Românii și politica externă rusească*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> See Emilian Bold, Ilie Seftiuc, *Pactul Ribbentrop-Molotov și implicațiile internaționale*, 2nd edition revised, Iași, Demiurg Plus Publishing House, Iași, 2010.

This treaty was a good opportunity for some Russian historians (A. Iazkova, Vinogradov, etc.) to claim that the whole “*story*” of the Romanian Treasury, old and “*unknown*” to them, is the task of historians to study, being a controversial issue and whose documentation is deficient. The concealment of the truth about the Treasury and the throwing into the garden of historians the “*mission*” to investigate all these problems whose solution was beyond their remit is nothing more than the endless repetition of what had already been said decades ago: “**we do not give!**”

In the hope of not abandoning the road full of papers to the desired restitution, in the ministry of prof. Adrian Năstase at Foreign Affairs, a Commission was set up consisting of specialists – historians, archivists, economists, military historians, research institutes of the Academy, Universities, The National Bank, the National Museum of Art, etc., whose mission was to compile as complete a documentation as possible on the issues of the Treasury. Made available to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all this documentary material would have been used to resume talks with the Russian side.

In **2003**, *the Basic Treaty between Romania and Russia* contains an *Annex* stating the need to set up a *Romanian-Russian Joint Commission* of specialists to investigate the “*issues of common interest*”, including the issue of the Treasury, the issue of the Soviet-German pact of August 1939 and others. The Romanian side of the Joint Commission was composed of the specialists mentioned above. Prof. Ioan Scurtu had, among his many duties and responsibilities, also that of coordinating the activity of the Romanian side of the Joint Commission. The development of its activity is recorded in general in its mentioned work.<sup>51</sup>

In retrospect, especially after the publication of Ilie Schipor’s book, it is clear that the aim pursued by Russia through the provisions of this *Annex* was to postpone *sine die* what Romania had demanded for a century and more, **the return of the treasury** confiscated in January 1918. Here I would like to emphasize that from 1918 until today, **Russia has never challenged Romania’s ownership of the Treasury**. But this **right** was and is seen and considered as a kind of “*theoretical right*” belonging to an ancient history that left no trace. “*Imaginary*” history that we only talk about while we “*nurse the fire*”!

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<sup>51</sup> Ioan Scurtu, *cited work*. See also Viorica Moisuc, *România și politica externă rusească*, pp. 23-27.

The Romanian side of the Joint Commission – which I was part of – resumed the activity of ordering the existing documents already in our portfolio, their completion, inventories verification and re-verification; synthesis materials were prepared on the issue of the Treasury, of the other issues specified in the Annex to the Treaty of 2003, legalized copies were made according to the original documents from 1916-1917-1918 regarding the organization of transport, shipment of goods, arrival at Kremlin and other deposits, the inventories made in those years in Moscow by the representatives of Romania and Russia; other synthesis materials included the Romanian-Soviet relations and the negotiations from 1919-1924, copies authenticated according to the documents existing in the Romanian archives, in films, the issue of 1934-1935, the situation created in 1940 and its consequences, the 1956 restitution and others. All this documentation would be the basis for the Romanian-Russian Joint Commission's discussions. *It is worth noting that amongst the tasks of this Commission it was not provide in the Annex to the Treaty or in any other joint documents – brought to the attention of the members of the Commission – that this body should have provided the “**solution**” to closing the dispute concerning the Treasury, i.e. its **restitution** as it was handed over for safekeeping or its **equivalence** in some way.*

Thus, the Romanian historians from this Joint Commission provided the Russian colleagues with an almost complete documentation on the history of the Treasury during the period from the first negotiations for its transfer to Russia to the present day, as it appears from the Romanian archives. In opposition, and during all meetings in Bucharest and Moscow, the Russian side asserted the old thesis of the “*unawareness*” of these documents, their lack from the Russian archives, the lack of time for extensive investigations, which was tantamount to denying, in fact, the authenticity of the documents presented by the Romanians. More recently, during the talks, it was stated that such documents regarding the Romanian Treasury and its pilgrimages would have been “*classified*” in Russia, that removing them from this regime would be a long and very difficult operation – misinformation about which I will refer to below.

At the same time, placing itself on Brezhnev's position in 1965, the group of Russian historians tried to transfer all the weight and interest of the discussion with the Romanians on issues unrelated to the Treasury, within the framework offered by the so-called mutual “**settlements**”. It goes without saying that, in fact, “*reciprocity*” did not fit into these accounts at all: the Romanians owed Russia for the “*occupation*” and “*exploitation*” of Bessarabia – “*Russian land*” – from 1918 to 1940, then from 1941 to in 1944,

for the “*exploitation of Transnistria*”, for the “*robberies*” attributed to the Romanian army during the “*occupation*” of Northern Bukovina – which became “*Russian land*” as well –, for the “*robbery*” attributed to the Romanian administration during the occupation of some Ukrainian territories during the war and many others. For all this, Romania was – according to the Russian account – indebted to Russia for many generations, so the value attributed to the Treasury was ...nothing!

At the basis of such a “*expense*” was the mentality according to which Bessarabia, N. Bukovina, Hertza and other Romanian territories (which did not even appear in the *ultimatums of June 1940*), simply occupied by the Soviet army, were “**Russian lands**” – **released from the Romanian occupation!**

As for Russia’s “*debts*” to Romania, the issue was “*settled*” by Brezhnev in **1965**: in the archives, Brezhnev said, “*there is a document showing that **Royal Romania has debts to Tsarist Russia for arms deliveries and other things in the amount of US \$ 300 million, which corresponds to 274 tons of gold...***” And further: “*the commissions of proxies that established the losses caused by the war in Odessa and Crimea, as well as from documents referring to the actions of the Romanian troops, the losses caused **exceed 100 times** what we are discussing today. ...The whole people, the whole party knows that **the war reparations of 300 million dollars paid by Romania were only symbolic. Did only these 300 million dollars were enough for the restoration of Crimea and Odessa?***” Brezhnev’s calculations go so far as to deny Lenin’s statements about the “*Romanian gold*” made in the document of January 13/26, 1918, a document quoted by A. Bârlădeanu in his speech and then widely repeated by N. Ceausescu. The Soviet leader stated that “**Lenin says that the Romanian archives should be kept, but he did not refer to these boxes. No. Because the war started, and this territory was conquered. We don’t know if they were stored there or taken out. But, after such serious events, **it is difficult to restore what happened...**** If we also start to unravel this old problem, ...this could inevitably lead to the appearance of undesirable phenomena and the incitement of passions. Brezhnev’s conclusion, mentioned above, was that **the issue of the Treasury “must be buried”, a thesis categorically rejected by the Romanian delegation.**

### **Russia’s plan to abolish Romania**

General Mossolov – appointed in November 1916 Minister Plenipotentiary of Russia in Romania in Poklevski-Koziell’s place – has a meeting with Nicholas II before leaving for office, during which the Tsar states: “*I grant you powers that are not even given to ambassadors*”; the two

talk about “a secret” that should not be known “*except in the Imperial Quarter*”, where the telegrams sent from Romania by Mossolov will be deciphered and then presented to the Tsar. At the end of the meeting, Nicolae states again: “*I give these instructions personally to Mossolov and not to the minister in Romania*”. Impressed by what the Tsar had entrusted to him as a “*secret mission*,” Mossolov said: “*I feel the supreme support you are kind enough to give me. With such support, I believe that I will be able to carry out the mission of high responsibility that you have given me.*”<sup>52</sup>

Who was General Mossolov and what superior reasons required his appointment to Romania in a “*diplomatic*” position? Count de Saint Aulaire, Minister of France in Romania, close collaborator of I.I.C. Brătianu, a keen observer of the events taking place in Romania at the time, notes in his memoirs: “*Mossolov, director of the Imperial Chancellery, affiliated with the Germanophile group protected by the new Prime Minister Störmer and – as it was said – also by Rasputin... enjoying great confidence in the Imperial Court... had (in Romania) an attitude of satrap or viceroy.*”<sup>53</sup>

What *secret mission* was the Tsar preparing for his “*ally*” Romania? The owner of the secret, General Mossolov, says nothing but confesses that his relations with the emperor were “*direct*”, “*secret*”, and “*of great responsibility*”. Existing documents and testimonies show quite clearly the Russian plans for Romania in those years.

Mossolov had practically to execute the decisions taken at the highest Russian political and military level some time before. The Russian archives shed light on the far-reaching action taken by Russia to **liquidate** Romania, which had already begun by failing to fulfil the military obligations assumed under signature by Russia in 1914 and 1916.

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<sup>52</sup> A.A. Mossolov, *Misiunea mea în România. Curtea imperială a Rusiei și Curtea Regală a României în timpul războiului (Memorii)*. Edition prepared for printing, prefaced, and annotated by Marin C. Stănescu, Silex, Bucharest, 1997, p. 34.

<sup>53</sup> Comte de Saint-Aulaire, *Confession d'un vieux diplomate*, Flammarion, Paris, 1953, p. 379: “*...affilié à la coterie germanophile protégé du nouveau premier ministre Sturmer et, disait-on du Raspoutine ...pourvu d'un grand crédit à la Cour de Russie..., à Jassy il y faisait figure de satrape ou de vice-roi*”. After the fall of tsarism in Russia, Mossolov was removed from office and – says Saint-Aulaire – left without any income, on the street. With the support of Brătianu and the French minister, the daughter of the former Russian minister obtained a job as a typist, her salary being the only source of livelihood for Mossolov, who had a considerable fortune in Russia.

One of the eloquent examples is how Stavka approached the obligation that incurred to Russia through the aforementioned Conventions on the Dobrogea's *Defence*. I prefer to refer to foreign testimonies that cannot be suspected of "bias." Saint-Aulaire's judgment: *"The relentless abandonment of Dobrogea, despite its solemn commitment to defend it, was in line with Russia's political strategy as well as Russia's military strategy. No less. 'Holy Russia' was ready to treat enemies as allies and allies as enemies, when it took Bulgaria to its bosom, Bulgaria who took advantage by stabbing the dagger in the back, to suffocate Romania or make it perish by starvation. It / Russia / saw in Bulgaria a way to achieve its goal: Constantinople; in Romania it saw an obstacle."*<sup>54</sup>

I return to the testimonies contained in the documents kept in the Russian archives, researched, and published by Ilie Schipor: the tragedy of Romania carefully woven in Petersburg appears in a manner that, perhaps, we would not have suspected. From the avalanche of new information, I will stop at what seemed to me to draw in essential lines a part – only – of the Russian plan for the liquidation of Romania.

On **October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1916**, the Minister of Finance, P.L. Bark, sent General M.V. Alexeev, the head of the Supreme Command of the Russian Imperial Army, the proposal to "suggest" to the Bucharest authorities the need for the National Bank of Romania to be evacuated to Russian territory<sup>55</sup>, by asking "if it would not be appropriate to take suitable measures to protect the reserve of the National Bank of Romania?", stating without reservation that, if the answer was affirmative, "do not hesitate... to propose to the Government of Romania our services regarding the transport of the Romanian gold in one of the branches of the State Bank, where it could be kept in the future until more favourable events."<sup>56</sup> Two days later, Alexeev sent General Beliaev, on the Romanian front, Bark's request, asking him to find out the "opinion of the Romanian Government" and "if it agrees, to proceed **now** with

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 365: „L'abandonne sans coup-férir de la Dobroudja, malgré l'engagement solennel de la défendre, répondait à la stratégie politique comme à la stratégie militaire de la Russie... La <<Sainte Russie>> n'en persiste pas moins à traiter l'ennemi en allié et l'allié en ennemi, à embrasser la Bulgarie qui en profita pour la poingarder dans le dos, à tenter d'étouffer la Roumanie ou à la faire périr d'inanition. Elle voit dans la Bulgarie un pont vers son rêve : **Constantinople** ; dans la Roumanie, un obstacle”.

<sup>55</sup> Ilie Schipor, *cited work*, p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. no. 1 , pp. 129-131 (The document comes from the Russian State Military Archives).

*these measures.*<sup>57</sup> On **November 2<sup>nd</sup>**, Beliaev informed his superior that the National Bank had already evacuated its gold reserve to Iasi.

Thus, after witnessing the military disaster of the Romanian Army, the *selfless* Russian help to “save” the National Bank’s **gold** by bringing it to Russia was what this “*great ally*” offered to Romania.

The Russian military and political authorities were closely following the development of the “**gold**” action. The Russians’ concerns about the fate of the “*gold*”, the actions taken to “save” it by bringing it to Russia coincided with the concerns of the Prime Minister I.I.C. Brătianu for the *fate of the conquered Romanian land, the fate of Bucharest on the verge of being occupied*. On **November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1916**, Brătianu made a *very urgent* appeal to General C. Coanda, the Romanian representative in Stavka, urging him to ask the “*allies*” not to remain “*impassive*” in the face of the prospect of occupying Bucharest, to make “*a rapid movement of Russian troops on the left bank of the Danube, which – Brătianu hopes – could avoid disaster.*”<sup>58</sup> But Brătianu’s request did not interest the Russians; it is known today – countless military, diplomatic, political documents, testimonies of all kinds (e.g. the accounts of General Ludendorff who considered that the inactivity of the Russian army in the battle of Bucharest would have been decisive for the German victory) that “**Russian military aid in the battle for Bucharest did not exist**”. In fact, the documents published by I. Schipor reveal an unparalleled cynicism in the attitude of Russia even in those fatal days for the fate of the capital of an allied country: to the urgent call of the Romanian Prime Minister on **November 2<sup>nd</sup>**, Stavka answered only on **November 14<sup>th</sup>**, **when the capital had already surrender**, in a telegram addressed to General Beliaev, in Romania, from which it results the Russian vision on the notion of “*ally*” and “*contractual obligations*”. As if the clear and precise text assumed by Russia of the 1916 **Military Convention** did not exist, the mentioned document clearly states: “*The plight of the Romanians obliges us, by virtue of our moral obligations to the Allies, to help them. The loss of Bucharest will have a colossal moral impact. Our Western Allies are constantly making efforts to help Romanians.*” Sure, the Russians would have helped the Romanians promptly, but Stavka’s explanations sound like this: a part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Russian Army that should have been sent to the Bucharest area, “*refusing even the offensive scheduled for November 15<sup>th</sup>*” was a failed project – because “*the Romanians cannot provide the necessary number of trains, especially now that there is an intense evacuation of*

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, doc no. 3, pp. 134-135 (the same source).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 6, p. 140 (the same source).



*Bucharest.*” But, troubled by the concern for his “ally”, “*the tsar was kind enough to order the troops of the Danube Army to be sent to Romania’s aid as soon as possible.*”<sup>59</sup> We were dealing with other promises empty of content.

Even in those tragic days, the supplies of the Russian army on Romania’s territory could not suffer any delay, for which reason, the **National Bank** “depending on Romania’s Government” had allocated to the Russian ally “12.5 million lei – of which 6 million 900 thousand lei are intended especially for the supply of the Army in November.”<sup>60</sup>

Only on **November 25 / December 8**, the Russian Minister Poklevski-Koziell informed the Russian MFA that Finance Minister E. Costinescu was delivering to the Russian Government the following message: “*The Romanian Government would now like to transfer to Moscow its gold stock and some documents and papers; for this, it requests that a train consisting of 25 solid freight wagons and 5 passenger wagons for the personnel accompanying the Romanian values be made available to it in Iasi, as soon as possible.*” The Romanian Government – Koziell adds – “*asks the imperial government not to refuse the request to take over the guarding of these values during their transport to Moscow.*” Poklevski’s telegram is shown to the Tsar, who, with his own hand, stated, “**We must agree,**” *Tsarskoe Selo, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1916.*<sup>61</sup> On **November 28<sup>th</sup>**, hence after three days, the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded positively to the Romanian request communicated by its minister in Iasi.

On **November 26 / December 9, 1916**, the Mossolov character appears in Iasi, the Tsar’s trusted man having the special “*mission*” entrusted to him in the *tête-à-tête* conversation on the eve of his departure for Romania.

As soon as he took office, Mossolov acted in a new position: “*What were the first steps I had to take? First of all, measures had to be taken to transfer Romanian gold to Russia.*” Judgemental towards Prime Minister I.I. C. Brătianu, who had already informed his predecessor, Poklevski-Koziell, that the measure proposed by him regarding the “*transfer*” of Romanian gold to Russia was “inappropriate”, the Tsar’s envoy notes: “*...I was of the opinion that, given the disaster in which Romania was, it was necessary to transfer the Romanian gold to Russia without delay because, at one time or another, the Military convention could have been annulled!*” Was Mossolov anticipating

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 7, p. 141 (the same source).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 8, p. 142 (the same source).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 10, pp. 144-145 (The document comes from the Russian Federation State Archives).

a definitive withdrawal of Romania from the fight, its total occupation by the Centrals? But he continues the reports about his efforts to convince the Romanians of the “necessity” of hastening the desired evacuation of gold in Russia: *“Early this morning I went to Brătianu to discuss this issue with him. Without opposing my proposal, however, he considered the transfer of gold untimely and asked to wait a little bit longer, not to be in too much of a hurry. I explained to him then – Mossolov argues – that the solution of the problem cannot be delayed because **the Imperial Quarter was beginning to be credited with the idea that a big mistake had been made when it was decided to extend the line of our front in Romania. Those who now lamented Romania’s unlucky intervention in the war feared new complications... The train shortage could delay the arrival of Russian troops on the Romanian front.**”* And Mossolov brings in his plea the “supreme argument”: *“**The shipment of the Romanian gold to Russia was meant to further strengthen the alliance ties between our two countries and... the arrival of Russian reinforcements will thus be much eased.**”!*<sup>62</sup> (emphasis added – V.M.)

The Romanian Prime Minister refused – diplomatically – the general’s honest offer and we find out that *“Brătianu sent me to Emil Costinescu, the then Minister of Finance, whom – Mossolov notes with satisfaction – I managed to convince him of the usefulness and necessity of these measures, insisting on **the full security that Russia offers, even when certain political unrest occurs.** After the meetings I had with Brătianu and then with Emil Costinescu, the decision was made to transfer the gold immediately. Two or three days have passed. Faced with this new delay, I went to Queen Maria, who sent me to Prince Stirbei.”*

In truth, the Russians were worried about the repeated delays in transporting the long-awaited **gold** transport. General V.I. Gurko, who at that time was replacing General M.V. Alexeev, sent a letter to Mossolov in Romania on **December 5<sup>th</sup>**, in which he expressed the fear that the Romanian authorities **are deliberately delaying**, under various pretexts, the shipment of the **gold** and stated, *“...I conclude that the Romanians are dodging to put into practice their initial intention and that they have decided to probably to resolve that issue without our participation and, perhaps, **without taking into account our interests... the change in this regard of the Romanian Government’s intentions I consider it undesirable and unacceptable.**”*

Gurko asks Mossolov *“to insist in the strongest and most energetic way with the Romanian Government on the need to also send other Romanian*

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<sup>62</sup> Mossolov, *cited work*, p. 66.

values to Russia, emphasizing that this operation... appeared at the initiative of the Romanians themselves and that the reference to the fact that the cargo is not ready for shipment is unfounded, as its transport to Iasi has already been carried out and we do not see what could be the obstacles to send it further to Russia.” In the few lines handwritten by Gurko at the end of the letter, he again expresses his determination that **the Romanian gold** should come under Russian control as soon as possible.<sup>63</sup>

The Russian plan to “save” the Romanian **gold** in Russia was fulfilled on **December 14/27, 1916**, when the first transport left Iasi station for Moscow. Satisfied, Mossolov writes in his *Memoirs*: “Finally... the gold was loaded and shipped in my presence. The train set in motion; it was guarded and escorted by a Russian detachment. I had no peace until I found out that the convoy had crossed the border into Russia.”<sup>64</sup> Immediately after the departure of this transport, Russian Minister Mossolov sent a telegram to Emperor Nicholas II on **December 15<sup>th</sup>** announcing that “the shipping of this Stock [Romania’s gold stock] took place only today, December 14<sup>th</sup>, after many delays and postponements, due to the Romanian procrastination; I also suspect a Germanophile Jewish influence of the banks’ leaders,”<sup>65</sup> Mossolov added.

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From the documents in the Romanian archives, published in the volumes to which I have always referred to in the previous pages, the sequence – in short of the events ending with the departure, on **December 14/27, 1916**, of the train carrying the Treasury of Romania to Russia – is as follows:

**17/30 November 1916** – Decree no. 3120 signed by Ferdinand I and Victor Antonescu, Minister of Justice, by which it is decided to move the NBR headquarters to Iasi.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Schipor, *cited work*, doc. no. 17 (The document comes from the Russian Federation State Archives).

<sup>64</sup> Mossolov, *cited work*, p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> Schipor, *cited work*, p. 169, doc. no. 26 (The document comes from the Russian Federation State Archives).

<sup>66</sup> On **October 11, 1916**, the General Council of the NBR had taken the decision “to relocate the residence and the legal and de facto headquarters of the National Bank” to Iasi, the place where the official residence of the Romanian Government would be according to the already existing decision. (C.I. Băicoianu, *Istoria politicii noastre monetare și a Băncii Naționale 1914-1926*, vol. III, Bucharest, 1933, p. 133 and following (according to V. Moisuc, *România și politica externă rusească...*, p. 121).

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1916** (old style)<sup>67</sup> – The General Council of the National Bank of Romania decided to relocate the Treasury to Russia “only” after the Russian Government met the conditions required by the NBR, including ensuring its safekeeping, recognizing the Bank’s ownership of the Treasury by signing official documents.<sup>68</sup>

**December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916** (old style) – Address no. 1152 of the Ministry of Finance to the NBR in which Minister E. Costinescu informs that General Mossolov told G. Danielopol (authorized by the NBR to discuss the issue of treasury transport, storage, safekeeping with the Russian Minister) that he was authorized by the Russian Minister of Finance to sign the Protocol to this operation.<sup>69</sup>

**December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916** (old style) – Letter no. 1151 of the Minister of Finance, E. Costinescu addressed to the NBR announcing that General Mossolov “gave verbal assurances” that he would sign the delivery and receiving Protocol of the “Bank’s metal stock” on behalf of the imperial government “containing all the necessary insurance for the Bank, both for the transportation of that stock and for its storage in the Kremlin’s Imperial Treasury.”<sup>70</sup>

**December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916** (old style) – Confidential Telegram no. 149 of the Imperial Russian Legation to the Romanian Ministry of Finance, through which the Russian Foreign Minister, Pekovsk, announces that the Minister of Finance, Bark, has delegated General Mossolov to sign on his behalf the Protocol stating that “a number of crates with the value declared by the NBR were loaded onto the train and that the Russian Government guarantees their integrity, both during transportation and during storage in Moscow.”<sup>71</sup>

**December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1916** (old style) – Note no. 1267 addressed by the Russian Minister of Finance, Bark, to A. Costinescu announcing the empowering of State Councilor Kowalnitsky to sign on his behalf the Protocol of reception and “storage in Moscow, **with the guarantee of the Russian government, of the sealed crates of National Bank, with declared value.**”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Viorica Moisuc, *cited work*, doc. nr. 3, p. 123.

<sup>68</sup> C.I. Băicoianu, *cited work*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>69</sup> Viorica Moisuc, *cited work*, doc. no. 4, p. 124.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 6 and note 12, p. 126 (The document comes from the NBR Archive).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 8, p. 128 (The document comes from the Romanian MFA Archive).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 7, p. 12 (The document comes from the NBR Archive).

**December 1916** – The note sent by the NBR leadership to the Russian Minister informing him of the conditions of the evacuation, the delivery-reception procedure, the transport, the deposit in the reserved compartments in the Kremlin, inventory, security guard, the signing by both parties of the Protocol.

**December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1916** – The protocol concluded in Iasi, between the Minister of Finance of Romania, Victor Antonescu, and the Minister of Russia, A. Mossolov, on the occasion of sending to Moscow the Romanian Treasury (BNR values) – *the first transport*. This act specifies: “*The treasury of the National Bank of Romania, as well as the other two creates<sup>73</sup> are, since the day they were entrusted to the delegate of the Imperial Government of Russia and loaded into wagons, under the guarantee of the Imperial Government of Russia in terms of transport’s security, security of storage, and return to Romania.*”<sup>74</sup>

The documents and testimonies inserted in the above sketch regarding the first transport of the National Bank of Romania’s values to Russia represent the current state of knowledge of these events. The conclusions are defined differently, given the bringing to light of documents from the Russian archives – unknown to Romanian historians when the volumes of documents and works published until 2021 were elaborated.

It is clear from the above that Romania’s military disaster after the war, largely due to Russian betrayal, has created the desired conditions for the implementation of the plan designed at the highest political, military, and financial level of Russia, to dispossess Romania of the entire gold stock of the National Bank that guarantees the country’s monetary policy.

This action was only one of the chapters of Imperial Russia’s plan to **liquidate** Romania as a state in this part of Europe targeted by Russian imperialism.

Once the first part of the mission entrusted by the Tsar was completed – **the evacuation of gold** –, Mossolov proceeds to the next major action planned by the Russians: **the evacuation of Romania**. In the above-mentioned telegram sent to the Tsar on *December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1916*, the Russian minister wrote: “*It would be highly desirable for a direct train from Iasi to Petrograd to be organized at least once a week in the shortest possible*

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<sup>73</sup> In the two creates mentioned separately, were the jewelry of Queen Maria with a declared value of 7 million gold-lei.

<sup>74</sup> Viorica Moisuc, *cited work*, doc no. 10, p. 129 (The document comes from the Romanian MFA Archive).

*time, which would make it possible for the most hesitant part of society to flee from Romania, to gradually relieve the city of its presence.*<sup>75</sup>

Mossolov makes a trip to Galati where General Sakharov, the supreme commander – at the time – of the Romanian Front was, where “*we discussed at length and in detail the issue of rail transport*” and, of course, the issue directly related to it, namely the *evacuation* of Romania.<sup>76</sup> Sakharov demanded that “*Romanian troops and their French instructors be deployed to the Russian territory to facilitate the operations of our army on the Romanian front... The presence of Romanian troops in the immediate vicinity of the front hindered our movements and, in their state of moral depression after the recent defeats, the Romanians could give in to the slightest failures and attract the Russians in their hasty retreat.*” “*We failed to persuade General Berthelot to accept our point of view,*” said Mossolov. “*French instructors did not agree with the evacuation of **the remains of the Romanian army** in Russia... Berthelot denies the need for the Russians to have a larger field of manoeuvre, he categorically opposes the evacuation of Romanian troops to the east.*”<sup>77</sup> (emphasis added – V.M.)

The Russian minister’s “*personal*” opinion on the military mission led by General Berthelot is unreservedly expressed in these terms: “*...For these officers – ‘of exceptional value’ – admits Mossolov, who had fought on the western front, the sending to Romania was a kind of rest. They had a limited influence on demoralized and discouraged soldiers... I considered that the evacuation of **the remnants of the Romanian army** in Russia and the encampment in Russian villages would have been very desirable for the soldiers...*” This evacuation, said the Russian diplomat, meant “*from **our point of view** that we too should take part in the reorganization of the army and the reconstruction of the railways, and that the credit for this should not be attributed only to France after **Russia sent a strong army to stop the German invasion of Romania***” (emphasis added – V.M.) “*It was my duty to explain to the French the reasons why it was so necessary to evacuate the Romanian army, **what it was left of it, to Russia.** I did not want to give this issue the form of an **ultimatum addressed to Romanians so as not to create divergences between us and the French.***”<sup>78</sup>

In this regard, it should be noted that Mossolov’s statements fully confirm what General Berthelot, on his way to Romania with the French

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 170.

<sup>76</sup> Mossolov, *cited work*, p. 64.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 81.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

military mission<sup>79</sup>, had learned from talks with Störmer, Russia's prime minister, and General Alexeiev, the supreme commander of the Imperial Army. In fact, the French Military Archives provide rich and revealing documentation on Russia's policy towards Romania in these years of disaster. In the report no. 12 of **1/14 May 1917**, entitled ***Coupe d'œil rétrospectif sur l'action russe en Roumanie depuis l'entrée en guerre de cette Puissance*** (*Retrospective look at Russian action in Romania since the entry of this Power into war*), Berthelot presents the French Ministry of War a realistic analysis of how the Russian "ally" not only failed to fulfil its contractual and, in fact, moral obligations to Romania, but acted to bring it out of the fight and liquidate it as a state: *"I think it is not opportune to present to you, with all sincerity – Berthelot begins his report – my personal opinion on the role played by Russia in all this Romanian drama. All the reports I have sent you since my arrival in Romania, they have showed you, successively, the disappointments we had from the Russians. Convinced that they acted like loyal allies, we hesitated to interpret the facts, limiting ourselves to recording them. Thus, between October 15 and December 1, we witnessed the repeated postponement of the Letchisky offensive:<sup>80</sup> I noted the inexplicable delays of the Russian forces [which should have been] involved in the battle for Bucharest... then the withdrawal of Sakharov's army from the moment its first divisions were deployed on Ialomitsa; the evacuation of Buzau without a fight. Established on the Ramnic line, the Russian army could have withstood having the mountains on the right, the Danube on the left, at the same time having organized formidable positions in Dobrogea, in the narrowest part. In the two parts of the river, we saw the same thing: the Germans were putting pressure on a retreating division, others are only thinking of retreating. In this way, all the land south of Siret*

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<sup>79</sup> On October 15, 1916, the French military mission arrived in the country with 1,200 combatants, including 400 officers. In a conversation with General Joffre on the eve of his departure for Romania, he told Berthelot: *"Russia does not welcome you. Be careful!"*, apud Sainte-Aulaire, *cited work*, p. 346: *„La Russie ne vous verra pas d'un bon œil. Méfiez-vous-en"*.

Shortly after the arrival of the French military mission, the Russian military mission, led by General Beliaev, also arrived in Romania. The purpose of his work was defined by the top leadership of the Russian army: *"Remember that our main goal is to prevent the success of the French mission" („N'oubliez-vous pas que notre objectif essentiel est d'empêcher la mission française de réussir")*; apud Sainte-Aulaire, *cited work*, p. 349.

<sup>80</sup> The commander of the Russian army in the battle for Bucharest.

and Dobrogea was lost. This was not a battle; it was an evasion or a **defection**. I uttered the word defecation. As for the soldiers, the term is not valid, because they were doing what they were told to do, ...it is valid for those who directed this drama.”

**“I am convinced that** – General Berthelot points out – **Romania’s entry into the game, which was not wanted by the Russians because a great Power was created alongside [Russia], determined the decision to abandon Romania, not to do anything to help it: hence the abandonment of the Romanians in front of Bucharest, the evacuation of Dobrogea and the retreat to Ramnic.”**<sup>81</sup> Or on the line of Siret, as General Alexeev has stated on **October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1916**, pointing with a ruler on the map: **“Romanians must resist here. The rest does not matter.”**<sup>82</sup>

Romania’s tragic situation had not yet reached its climax. However, Russia had achieved two of its objectives: had captured Romania’s **gold**, had abandoned the battlefield in Dobrogea, Muntenia, had also seen the capital fall under German-Austro-Hungarian occupation, and had also seen the refuge in Moldova of all the authorities led by King Ferdinand and the whole Royal House. But, as I said, that was not all Russia wanted.

Mossolov returns in his *Memoirs* to the issue of the “evacuation” in Russia: *“This evacuation is the order of the day at our headquarters. Or, in Iasi, the Romanians, especially the King and Queen, did not even want to hear about such a thing. Brătianu also strongly opposed such an eventuality. It was as clear and natural as possible at the same time – the Russian minister admits – that neither Regina nor Brătianu would admit that Romania*

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<sup>81</sup> Vincennes, *État-major de l’Armée de Terre* (from now on EMAT – Vincennes), Carton 17 N-540, (no page number)

*Mission Française en Roumanie*, Rapport no. 12, 1/14 May 1917, Chap. V: *Coup d’œil rétrospectif sur l’action russe en Roumanie depuis l’entrée en guerre de cette Puissance.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*. See also the confirmation of Alexeev’s “recommendation” related by Saint-Aulaire: When, on the way to Romania General Berthelot stopped in Stavka for a meeting with Alexeev, he wished him “good luck” but added: **“Make those people understand that Romania should not defend the Carpathians but Siret.”** And with a coup-papiers, he showed on the map that the rupture between **“Wallachia which must be evacuated and Moldova which must be defended”** (Saint-Aulaire, *cited work*, p. 350) **“Puisque les Roumains tiennent tant à vous avoir, bonne chance, mais surtout tâchez de faire comprendre à ces gens – là que la Roumanie ne se défend pas sur les Carpates, mais bien sur le Sereth. Et, d’un coup – papiers, il me montrait sur la carte, qu’il frappait à coups redoublés, la coupure entre la Valachie à évacuer et la Moldavie à défendre, comme glacié de la Russie.”**



would become a state without territory. Brătianu firmly believed in the final victory of the Allies and rightly believed that Romania would be in a bad position if it ceased to exist for some time.”<sup>83</sup>

The opposition met by the Russians to their evacuation “offer” did not discourage Mossolov or his superiors. Intense preparations were being made in Russia. Mossolov was asked for exact information about the institutions to be evacuated, about the transportation of the diplomatic corps, the deployment of public services, private individuals, etc. Unable to meet these requirements, Mossolov asked to be sent from Petrograd “a very experienced official who worked in the Ministry of the Interior. According to Mossolov, he was to deal with all the issues related to the evacuation of Romanians and to successfully coordinate the measures we will take with the instructions we will receive from the various Russian ministries which were directly responsible for Romanians’ deployment into Russia.” The imperial prime minister urgently sent Chamberlain Yachevsky to Iasi.<sup>84</sup>

“As soon as he came to Iasi – Mossolov notes –, Iacevski visited **all Romanian ministries to draw up lists of senior officials to be evacuated.**”<sup>85</sup>

Another official was also sent to Iasi with the task of **distributing the evacuees on Russian territory, to ensure liaison with the various ministries.** At the same time, in Russia, action was taken to organize the evacuation of Romania as soon as possible. On **December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1916**, Russian Prime Minister A.F. Trepov asked the Tsar for approval to set up an **Interdepartmental Commission** to deal with and be responsible for all this complex evacuation of Romania: “*The extremely rapid evolution of the preparatory measures and the execution in order to **evacuate Romania** – Trepov wrote in the letter to the Tsar – demands the urgent need to concentrate all power in the hands of a single person – Senator **Zasiadko.***”<sup>86</sup>

On the same day, December 11<sup>th</sup>, the Zasiadko Commission was convened at the Council of Ministers of Russia, which included only highly trusted persons, including: Count V.B. Frederiks (**Minister of the Imperial Court** and Commander of the Imperial Headquarters), D.S. Shuvaev (**Minister of War**), A.A. Makarov (**Minister of Justice and Attorney**

<sup>83</sup> Mossolov, *cited work*, p. 82.

<sup>84</sup> Reliable and experienced person – he had been the secretary of several Russian governors in Poland.

<sup>85</sup> Mossolov, *cited work*, p. 85.

<sup>86</sup> I. Schipor, *cited work*, doc. no. 21, p. 160 (The document comes from the Russian Federation State Archives).

**General**), N.N. Pokrovski (**Foreign Minister**), P.L. Bark (**Minister of Finance**), Prince V.N. Tchaikovsky (**Minister of Industry and Commerce**), A.A. Doljenski (**Head of the Chancellery of the Supreme Commander of the Russian Army – Stavka**), A.D. Protopopov (**Deputy Minister of the Interior**), P.F. Iordanov (Deputy Head of the **Sanitary Evacuation Service**), General V.I. Gurko (**General Alexeiev’s Deputy**), S.A. Poklewski-Koziell (**former Russian minister in Romania – replaced by General Mossolov in November 1916**) and others.<sup>87</sup> As it turns out, the “**evacuation of Romania**” was a matter of major interest to Russia, this is why the Tsar himself dealt with it and the composition of the “**Evacuation Commission**” amply demonstrates this interest. The Tsar approved the composition and **mission** of the Commission, which was defined in the above-mentioned meeting as follows: “**the deployment of the Romanian government, the National Bank and its deposits in Russia**”<sup>88</sup>, the evacuation of the population, the army, institutions in the Russian governorates, the hosting of the Royal Court of Romania in Kherson etc.<sup>89</sup>

Zasiadko and his commission immediately took over. Arriving in Iasi, he and Mossolov drew up a concrete plan for **the evacuation of Romania**, which, among other things, provided that the transfer of the royal family from Romania to Russian territory should be the responsibility of the Ministry of the Imperial Court; for the accommodation of the Romanian evacuees to be made available the cities of Nikolaev, Kherson with the surrounding areas and the list was long<sup>90</sup>.

The Russian minister complained that the evacuation plan was jeopardized by the constant and categorical refusal of the King and Queen, the Prime Minister, and the French military mission. (Berthelot – writes Mossolov – “*strongly opposed the departure of Romanian troops from their country*”)<sup>91</sup> and, in addition, the refusal of foreign diplomats accredited in Iasi who “*were very hostile to the project of an evacuation to Russia*” – complains Mossolov. “*It was especially important – the imperial minister notes – to convince the Queen of the need to abandon Iasi – I even told her that it would be possible for her to live on a Romanian warship anchored in*

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. no. 22, pp. 161-162 (the same source).

<sup>88</sup> At that time, the BNR Treasury had not yet been shipped to Russia.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 23, p. 164 (the same source). On 28 July 1917, the Provisional Government decided that the tasks of this Commission should be taken over by the Evacuation Commission of the Special Defense Committee.

<sup>90</sup> Mossolov, *cited work*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88.

*Russian waters*”! Mossolov laments the stubbornness of the Romanians who did not understand that *“this evacuation was urgently required”* whose preparations were completed by the Russians and could have been carried out – he estimated – *“in two or three days, without haste and without panic!”*<sup>92</sup> Overwhelmed by their inability to complete their mission, Mossolov and Pokrovsky decided that *“general evacuation would be subject to the emperor as supreme commander of the imperial army.”*

Hence, at the end of 1916 and the beginning of the next one, when Romania lost, with the very interested *“help”* of the Russian ally, most of the country’s territory, lost the Treasury, faced the military and economic disaster, the ravages of famine and typhus, was about to be liquidated as a state, swallowed up by Imperial Russia.

Here is what General Berthelot wrote in a report to Joffre after a long conversation with General Gurko, Alexeiev’s replacement at Stavka: *“Regarding the reconstruction of the Romanian army, I felt that General Gurko had hidden thoughts. When I spoke about the interest in reconstituting the Romanian army as soon as possible... he said to me: ‘but what interest do you have for this army to go into battle so early – and, regarding its reconstruction – you seem to be much more Romanian than Romanians’.* I responded by supporting the need for all Allies to take immediate action.” Berthelot referred to the need for the Allies to make greater efforts to decide the fate of the war and, he explained, *“for this I call for swift action as well as the urgent reconstitution of the Romanian army.”* But Gurko had other priorities. Insisting on food shortages, he crossed the t’s: *“it is absolutely necessary, without hesitation, to rid Romania of such a large number of mouths to feed and he estimates necessary – Berthelot reported – to evacuate at least 200,000 people to Russia.”*<sup>93</sup> Regarding his findings during

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>93</sup> EMAT – Vincennes, Carton 17 N-540 (no page number), Annex to Report no. 8, January 18/31, 1918, *Note relative à ma conversation avec le gén. Gourko : „Relatif à la reconstitution de l’armée roumaine j’ai senti que le général Gourko avait une arrière-pensée. Lorsque je disais l’intérêt qu’il y avait à reconstituer cette armée roumaine le plutôt possible, celle – ci me paraissant susceptible de rendre des services à la cause commune, ...il m’a dit : «mais quel intérêt avez-vous donc à ce que cette armée entre en ligne si tôt» et, dans la question de sa reconstitution – «vous paraissez être beaucoup plus roumain que les roumains»* „il était nécessaire de débarrasser de toutes façons la Roumanie d’un assez grand nombre de bouches inutiles et qu’il estimait nécessaire d’évacuer en Russie en moins 200 000 personnes...»”.

the period of “collaboration” with the Russian allies, the head of the French military mission made a realistic remark about how the Russians used the food crisis in the interest of removing Romania from the game: *“It is undeniable that we are heading for a serious food supply crisis for the population and the military. In fact, the Russians are relying on this crisis to evacuate the Romanian army beyond the national territory.”*<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, Berthelot conveyed in his reports pertinent remarks on Russia’s intentions towards Romania; in that *Coup d’oeil rétrospectif* to which I referred above, he said: *“The reasons that led to the abandonment of Romania by the Russians have not disappeared: they have their origin in the profound differences of race and interests. Undoubtedly, the government saw the possibility of making Romania an object of exchange by giving the Wallachia to Austria, Dobrogea to the Bulgarians, keeping Moldova for itself, with the consent of Germany.”*<sup>95</sup>

### ***The truth “hidden” in the Russian archives***

As it can be seen, the truth of Ilie Schipor’s work is that the evacuation of the Treasury to Russia was mainly due to Russian desire and pressure. Checking this issue in the above-mentioned Romanian works, I found that there were some question marks regarding the interventions made by General Mossolov – the successor of the Russian Minister in Bucharest, Poklewsky-Koziell –, to the country’s leading dignitaries to speed up the evacuation of the Romanian gold, but the matter did not go further due to the lack of adequate documentation. All those of us who dealt with the history of the Treasury did not pay much attention to the information in Mossolov’s memoirs, which, moreover, were accessible to us very late. The expressions used by Mossolov in narrating the facts related both to the history of the Treasury and to the relations between Romania and Russia during the war years are deliberately confused and implicit, sometimes allusive.

I have shown above how I understand the framing in the time context of the issue regarding Mossolov’s role in the Romanian Government’s decision to *“shelter in Russia”* the country’s treasury. There are still question marks,

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem*, Report no. 8 , January 25 /February 7, 1917

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, Report no. 12, le 1/14 may 1917, Chap. V.: *„Les motifs qui ont amenée l’abandon de la Roumanie par les Russes n’ont pas disparu : ils sont basés sur une différence profonde de race et d’intérêts. Sans doute, le gouvernement avait – il entrevu la possibilité de faire de la Roumanie, un objet d’échange, en donnant la Valachie à l’Autriche, la Dobroudja aux Bulgares et en gardant pour elle-même la Moldavie, avec l’assentiment de l’Allemagne”.*

which are still unclear, regarding the way in which the Romanian decision-makers approached and responded to the “offer” made by the Russian Government to transfer the Romanian gold to Russia, about how they responded to the “*Russian pressures*” and many others. In the light of documents known so far, including those from the Russian archives, this issue remains open to research.

Another major chapter of new information from the Russian archives shows that the highest governing bodies of the USSR and its subordinate authorities closely monitored the situation of the Romanian Treasury in its entirety; the use of confiscated gold for various purposes was permanently reported accurately, the transfers of initial deposits to various other institutions were coordinated from the central level, etc.

One finding is clear from all these: the deliberate ill-will of all those (historians, Russian politicians, publicists, etc.) who have stubbornly claimed that **there are no accessible documents in the Russian archives regarding the Romanian Treasury**. Ilie Schipor found and published them, in **original** and in Romanian translation. Perhaps it will now be possible to inform the Russian historians, deprived, it seems, of the access to their own archives, accessible “*only*” for our colleague, Ilie Schipor.

It is not in the economy of this chapter to present – beyond the subject of the Romanian Treasury confiscated by Russia – the countless negative aspects of the relations with Imperial Russia, **the immeasurable moral and material damage to the Romanian people throughout history** by repeated tsarist occupations, the onerous transactions with the Ottoman Gate, with Napoleon’s France, with Austria and, later, the transactions of the Soviet Power with Germany, with the Allies from the Second World War, **all** centred on **the seizure of Romanian territories** and their exploitation, associated with the annihilation of living Romanians in the occupied provinces.

But I will show documents from the Russian archives and published by Ilie Schipor which **refute** the “*non-existence*” thesis, *the impossibility the Russian historians to access their own archives* and all other untruths circulated for decades, for one purpose: **the refusal to give accurate and documented explanations on the fate of the Treasury after its confiscation in January 1918, the refusal to return it either in the form in which it was sent to Russia and sealed in the compartment of the Kremlin Weapons Hall as well as in Sudnaia Kassa, or in an equivalent calculated at the current price.**

Comprehensive and well-documented is the way in which the Soviets disposed of the Romanian gold confiscated in January 1918 – without any

holdback; Ilie Schipor makes a detailed analysis of the documents that show that the situation of the Romanian Treasury was of most interest to the Soviet authorities up to the highest level, shows how Romania's gold was used to pay Russia's foreign debt, to support subversive actions against the Romanian state (action that also included the Communist Party of Romania – a subsidiary of the Comintern) and many other uses of the confiscated Romanian assets.

– As mentioned above, the first breach of the Kremlin deposit occurred on **January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1918**, when Soviet Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Maximovich **Fritsche**, **picked up 16 crates of Romanian banknotes** on the pretext that they were crates “*deposited there*” by the Soviet authorities – which did not exist in January 1917. The information appears in documents kept in the **State Archives of the Russian Federation** and in the **Russian State Archives for Social-Political History**.<sup>96</sup>

– In the meeting of the Political Bureau on **February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1921**, the “**Romanian goods**” were discussed: “*Comrade Krestinski is in charge with opening the warehouses with the Romanian goods and to clarify their content*”; on **14<sup>th</sup> of May**, at the suggestion of Foreign Policy Commissioner, Cicerin, the so-called “**Başa Commission**” was set up, whose mission was to “**effectively open rooms with such special values and hand over those goods to Soviet institutions for evaluation, storage, etc.**”<sup>97</sup>

– The “**Başa**” Commission reports shortly (June 1921) that the crates containing the Romanian valuables deposited in July 1917 in Sudnaia Kassa were transported to the Kremlin; the detailed accompanying annexes to the Proceedings prove the existence of these values, at that date, data that confirm in general the inventories from 1917.<sup>98</sup>

– The situation of the gold stock and other Romanian values was carefully monitored, Lenin personally requesting to be informed about the “**spending of the gold stock**” and stating that their “*movement*” should be monitored and regularly updated.<sup>99</sup>

– On **August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1922**, an extensive document from the RSFSR State Archives speaks of the opening of a number of crates in the Kremlin deposit

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<sup>96</sup> Ilie Schipor, *cited work*, doc. no. 60, 63, pp. 215-216, 220-221.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. no. 61, 62, pp. 217, 218, also in the Archive for Socio-Political History.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 65, 66, 67, pp. 225-229, in the State Archive and the Archive for Socio-Political History.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 70-73, pp. 233-240

and the verification of their content – these were the values sent with the second shipment from July 1917 – and the summary inventory realised on that occasion.<sup>100</sup>

– In August **1923**, documents from the RSFSR State Archive refer to the inventory that was organized regarding the Romanian “*museum and archival goods*”.<sup>101</sup>

– Of special interest is the document from **December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1924**, a “*strictly secret*” report on the Romanian Treasury evacuated to Russia, also in the State Archives of the RSFSR.

The document specifies:

*“... The values of the Kingdom of Romania evacuated to Russia consisted of:*

- a) the gold stock;*
- b) the values of the royal family;*
- c) simply banknotes and various assets of the Bank of Romania;*
- d) other values of private banks.*

*The values in points (a), (b) and (c) were deposited in the Kremlin’s Arms Palace depots.*

***The first opening of these deposits was made in February 1919, by the director of the People’s Bank, comrade Commissioner S. Ganețki who took the values (brilliants) of the Royal Family and some of the banknotes. Then, in the fall of 1919, during Denikin’s offensive, the gold reserves were sent as follows:***

***In Samara – Tashkent:***

- a) the English pounds;*
- b) the Turkish lira;*
- (c) the German marks.*

*In total, in the amount of about 59,650,000 gold roubles.*

***To Perm:***

- a) the Austrian crowns..... 548 boxes;*
- b) the German marks ..... 77 crates.*

*The French francs, the Romanian money, and other currencies, in the amount of about 18,300,000 gold roubles were left in Moscow.*

*Thus, the Gold Stock was valued at 117,800,000 + 118,000,000 gold roubles.*

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 77, 78, pp. 246-254.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. no. 89, 91, 96, pp. 276, 281, 296-298, etc.

..... After the return to Moscow... the French francs, the British pounds and the German marks were sent almost entirely and at various times abroad, at the disposal of the People's Commissariat for Finance.

The Austrian crowns were kept at the Treasury and were handed over at various times to the State Bank's Emission Section.<sup>102</sup>

Neither this explanatory document seems **to have been accessible** (!?! ) to Russian historians nor to Soviet politicians who permanently denied having known anything about the fate of the Romanian Treasury! Another synthesis document regarding the history of the Romanian Treasury is the "Report" dated **February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940**, signed by the director of the *Central State Archive of the October Revolution*, Kostomarov<sup>103</sup> in which the gold, jewellery, artistic values, archives, etc., its pilgrimages, repeated inventories, transfers to various places are recorded.

Perhaps knowing the current stage of the pilgrimages of the Romanian Treasury – a treasury that had to be preserved and returned – but which was unscrupulously rubbed by the Soviet power, we can better understand two issues: 1) **why**, even from the first so-called Romanian-Soviet negotiations from the 1920s until the last bilateral meetings of the Joint Commission established under the 2003 Treaty, the Soviet side did not deviate in the slightest from the thesis of combining the Treasury issue with unrelated issues: Bessarabia, reciprocal settlements etc.; 2) **why**, the "political problem" (The Treasury) was transferred to the field of "historical controversies" and thrown into the garden of the historians.

It is clear to everyone that what the power in Moscow did with the confiscated wealth of the Romanian state, disregarding treaties, its own commitments, denying its own signatures, violating international civic morality, secreting hundreds of documents from its archives to erase any trace represents a truth that is hard to admit, hard to recognize, but to which no lie, no matter how crafty, can change its face. As I said above, the "negotiations", the "bargaining", the "debates" between Romania and the Russian Imperial Power were, in fact, a permanent and unequal confrontation *between the force of law violated by the law of force*.

The chapter "The final assault: looting" from Ilie Schipor's book is incomprehensible to any Romanian who still believes in justice and truth.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Apud Ilie Schipor, *cited work*, doc. no. 121, pp. 339-340.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. no. 157, p. 407. See also doc. no. 159, pp. 416-417.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-50.



**The efforts of the Romanian-Russian Joint Commission for the Treasury issue have ceased during the mandate of Mr. Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu as Ministry of Foreign Affairs.**

The volume of Russian documents published by Ilie Schipor shows that the robbery went to the last leu of this Treasury, that we have little to talk about the *“restitution” of the assets of the Romanian people in the care of the Russian “ally”, and the “revaluation” and “equivalence” of these assets appropriated by the Soviet Power will always be opposed by the mutual “settlements” trouvaille.*

It is another black page in the history of the Russian-Soviet politics towards the Romanian people.

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I conclude this study on what is still called Romania’s “Treasury Problem” confiscated by the Russians, with excerpts from an article published in *April 2001* in the Romanian newspaper *Cuvântul românesc (The Romanian Voice / La Voix Roumaine)*, year 27, no. 291, Hamilton / Ontario, Canada, p. 23. The intervention, entitled “Igor Stroeve and the Study of the Problem of the Romanian Treasury Confiscated by the Soviets”, was motivated by the statements made by this person – President of the Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation – during his visit to Romania in April 2001. Mr. Stroeve, I wrote in that article, *“thought it was his right to say casually that the problem of Romania’s treasury deposited in Moscow during World War I ‘can be studied historically and scientifically’, saying that between the two states ‘there is no international treaties or agreements governing the return of property to Romania’ and that there is no official document by which ‘Romania could issue guardianship claims on those values’.*

Assuming that the Russian dignitary came to visit Romania *uninformed* on the issues to be discussed, I briefly presented the official documents on the basis of which the treasury was evacuated, deposited in the Kremlin, and finally confiscated with the rupture of diplomatic relations with Romania. I emphasized at the end of the article the conclusions of the Official Declaration of 13/26 January 1918, *“This Declaration of the Soviet Government represents in itself: 1) a clear recognition of the existence, in Russia, of the Romanian treasury, 2) a recognition of Romania’s property rights over it, 3) an assertion of the fact that the Soviet Government confiscates, but it does not appropriate these values, 4) the commitment of the Soviet Government to keep hold of (preserve) the*

Romanian treasury, 5) **the commitment of the Soviet Government to remit these values to their rightful owner**". I emphasized that the Declaration of 13/26 January 1918 "*strengthens and does not avoid*" the provisions of the Romanian-Russian Conventions of 1916-1917 regarding the evacuation of the Treasury to Russia. At the same time, I specified that "*subsequently no other agreements were concluded between the two states to cancel the above-mentioned ones. Moreover, there are countless documents attesting that, during the Romanian-Soviet negotiations from 1919-1924, the Soviet side implicitly and explicitly recognized Romania's right of ownership over the Treasury. **This right has never been revoked by anyone and nothing.***" Finally, referring to the Russian politician's "recommendation" for the historians, I pointed out that, in fact, the "*historical and scientific study*" of the treasury problem "*provides support and motivation for the current political approaches.*"

As I said, the "*political approaches*" regarding the Treasury have ceased to exist for years. What we should know, as "*owners*", is the answer to the question "*Does the issue of the Treasury still appear on the agenda of the Romanian-Russian bilateral relations? If so, how? If not, why not?*"

At the end of a century and a quarter of struggles, of hopes, of trials we were left with these questions, probably unanswerable.

Scrisoarea nr. 496, transmisă – la 28 octombrie 1916 – de către P.L. Bark, ministrul rus de finanțe, generalului M.V. Alekseev, șeful Statului Major General al Comandamentului Suprem rus

МИНИСТРЪ  
ФИНАНСОВЪ.

*Mr. G. Bark*

221

В. Срочно.

Совершенно доверительно.

УГЕНКВАРВЕРХ.  
— 29-ОКТ.-1916 —  
ВХ. № 30144

Милостивный Государь

Михаиль Васильевичъ.

Въ виду происходящихъ событій на Румынскомъ театрѣ военныхъ дѣйствій и возможной, въ связи съ ними, въ болѣе или менѣе близкомъ будущемъ, эвакуаціи Бухареста, не признавали ли бы Ваше Высокопревосходительство своевременнымъ принять соответствующія мѣры въ смыслѣ охраны золотого запаса Румынскаго Национальнаго Банка.

*29. X. 1916  
Шлепкин на  
Бухарестъ.  
Сообщенъ офиц.  
М. В.  
Можно ли попросить  
оказанія помощи  
своему сыну съ  
какимъ-то*

Въ случаѣ если Ваше Высокопревосходительство раздѣлите эту точку зрѣнія, я покорнѣйше просилъ бы Васъ не отказать, при посредствѣ военныхъ властей въ Румыніи, предложить Румынскому Правительству наши услуги въ отношеніи перевозки золота въ одно изъ Отдѣленій Государственнаго Банка, гдѣ таковое могло бы храниться впредь до болѣе благоприятныхъ событій.

*V  
по резолюціи  
П*

Вмѣстѣ съ тѣмъ, такъ какъ организація такой перевозки требуетъ извѣстнаго времени, я бы

Его Высокопревосходительству

М. В. АЛЕКСѢЕВУ.

покорнѣйше просилъ Ваше Высочайшее  
въ случаѣ согласія Румынскаго Правительства на  
наше предложеніе, сообщить мнѣ о семъ по воз-  
можности незамедлительно, дабы я могъ заблаго-  
временно дать нужныя инструкціи для организа-  
ціи приѣмки золота въ Яссахъ и дальнѣйшей его  
отправки вглубь Имперіи.

Покорно прошу Ваше Высочайшее  
принять увѣреніе въ совершенномъ почтеніи и  
искренней преданности

*Иванъ*

28 Октября 1916 года.  
№ 496



Telegrama nr. 5.966, transmisă – pe 30 octombrie 1916 – de către generalul M.V. Alekseev generalului M.A. Beliaev

ПЛАТА.		ТЕЛЕГРАММА.		ПЕРЕДАНА.	
За передачу	руб. коп.	изъ		21/1 40	224
За доставку				съ 6/1000	прош. № 133
Итого		1916 г. №		Переданъ: <i>Великопольский</i>	
Примеч.		ПОДАНА		Служебная ошметки:	
Видъ	Число словъ.	то ч. х. пополу		<i>Зашифрованъ</i>	
	и.			<i>вст</i>	
	ск.				
	и.				

*Бухарестъ*  
*Генералу Бельяеву*

*Министръ Финансовъ касательно вопроса о  
для случая возможности эвакуации Бухарестя  
только же признается ли своевременный при-  
нятие соответствующихъ меръ со стороны  
страны законного займа румынского на-  
ционального банка. Увердимишникомъ вопроса пре-  
дметливо предложитъ Румынскому правительству  
накъ учесть отпадение перевода закона  
одно изъ отпадений Государственного банка въ  
такаяже могло бы кредитовать вперед до более  
благодаритъ много времени. Благодарямъ запискамъ  
высокой степени компетентному вопросу <sup>интересу</sup>  
~~во~~ по сему Румынская правительстве  
и сомнеетъ ли оно теперь же приступитъ къ  
осуществлению этой меры. 5966*

*Алекеевъ*  
*Зашифрованъ Готурикъ етукитовъ.*

*30/10.* 1916 г. *В. А. Туринский*

Отъ Управления Генераль-Квартирмейстера при ВЕРХОВНОМЪ Главнокомандующемъ. \* Дѣлпроизводство.

Scrisoare, din 5 decembrie 1916, a generalului V.I. GURKO către ambasadorul rus în România,  
A.A. MOSOLOV

(extras)

Секретно.

Слѣшно.

НАЧАЛЬНИКЪ

ШТАБА

ВЕРХОВНАГО

главнокомандующаго.

5 Декабря 1916 г.

Милостивый Государь

№ 1820

Александръ Александровичъ,

Ставка.

Ссылаясь на телеграмму Д.С.С. Поклевскаго отъ 25 Ноября с.г. № 719 по вопросу о перевозкѣ въ Москву Румынскаго золотого фонда, поспѣшаю увѣдомить Ваше Превосходительство, что поѣздъ пресимаго Румынскимъ Правительствомъ состава былъ своевременно поданъ на станцію Яссы. Нынѣ изъ телеграммы завѣдывающаго передвиженіемъ войскъ при Румынской Главной Квартирѣ, Подполковника Остафьева, я освѣдомился, что Национальный Банкъ чрезъ своего Директора Болтіано сообщилъ названному офицеру, что грузъ къ отпавкѣ не готовъ и потому поѣздъ съ назначенными къ сопровожденію указаннаго груза лицами возвращается въ Одессу.

Считая ссылку на неготовность груза

Его Прев-ству

А. А. Мосолову.

къ отправкѣ лишь отговоркой, заключаю, что Румыны повидимому уклоняются отъ приведенія въ исполненіе первоначальнаго своего намѣренія и рѣшили распорядиться въ этомъ дѣлѣ безъ нашего участія и, можетъ быть, не въ согласіи съ нашими интересами.

По соображеніямъ политическимъ признаю необходимымъ, чтобы Румынскій золотой фондъ былъ переданъ на храненіе намъ, и переѣху на сей счетъ намѣреній Румынскаго Правительства считаю нежелательной и недопустимой.

Посему покорнѣйше прошу Ваше Превосходительство самымъ рѣшительнымъ и энергичнымъ образомъ настоять предъ Румынскимъ Правительствомъ на необходимости вывоза нынѣ же Румынскихъ цѣнностей въ Россію, указавъ при этомъ, что дѣло это возникло по почину самихъ Румынъ и что ссылка на то, что грузъ неготовъ къ отправкѣ, неосновательна, такъ какъ перевозка его до Яссы уже произведена и мы не видимъ какія могли явиться нынѣ препятствія къ дальнѣйшему направленію его въ Россію.

Примите увѣренія въ отличномъ почтеніи и преданности

*Я содѣлаю все зависящее  
Гавриилъ Щербаковъ*



