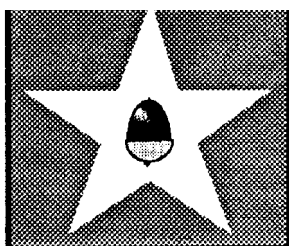


**Conflict Studies Research Centre**

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**Romanian-Russian Relations  
in the Context of the  
Euro-Atlantic Integration Process**

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**G100**

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**Dr Ionel Nicu Sava**

## ***Synopsis***

*It can be said that the Romanian-Russian relations are being shaped both by more or less remote past issues and by quite recent ones inherited by the post-communist world. There are numerous opportunities for developing cooperation in Europe which were only too difficult to imagine even 10 years ago. Indeed, considerable progress has been made in this respect, although without turning it to its best account.*

*European and Euro-Atlantic integration still pose serious problems to Russia. Russia cannot adapt to her new international post cold-war status, which has a negative impact on her relations with most of the East-European former communist states. Central and East-European states such as Romania have made efforts to normalize their relations with the Russian Federation, but the results are not yet satisfactory. Russia sees NATO and EU enlargement as an attempt to diminish her influence in Eastern Europe, while Romania and the other Eastern candidates see in their accession to these structures a sounder foundation on which to develop bilateral relations with Russia. This paper highlights the Romanian point of view on these issues, and outlines the approach of the main political parties in Romania to the country's relationship with Russia.*

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In 1848 an envoy of the French government in the Romanian Principalities wrote in a report to de Tocqueville that "*Russia has always seen with an evil eye the young people of the Principalities going to France*"<sup>1</sup> in order to complete their education. This supposedly epitomises Russia's discontent in Romania's moving too close to Western Europe. The first part of the article aims at analyzing whether this pattern of bilateral relations is true or not.

For Romanian-Russian relations "this is the question": on the one hand, Moscow has considered the integration of Romania and other Central and South-East European countries into Europe as a hostile move against Russia. Yet on the other hand, at the same time, Bucharest and the other capitals of the region have not managed to develop a concept of cooperation with Russia which will not be perceived as being against their western integration. This has resulted in a series of increasingly strained relations between Russia and the applicant countries. Moreover the situation is not new at all: tensions of this kind have had a dramatic impact on the history of these countries over the past two hundred years. Geography says the problems of the political history of such countries as Romania or Poland which would aim at modernizing and integrating into the Western world came from their geopolitical location. In the way of the Russian expansion route, these two countries reflect best the geopolitical strain between the development of western civilization and capitalism and the geographic and military expansion of the big Eastern power. However, this is not only geography. Seen from a larger perspective, the communist era ended in a blaze of glory this process of will-imposing on the occupied countries. Thus, in 1945, Soviet Russia started enforcing a political regime, notwithstanding the countries' traditions or natural endeavours. After 1989, for Russia the situation has not changed too much. Russia still sees Euro-Atlantic integration as a problem for her own development.

## Short History of Romanian-Russian Relations

In this general historic and geopolitical context there are also some particular developments triggered by earlier or more recent political events. Yet it is on recent history that we are going to focus here, and more precisely what comes after the end of the Cold War. We are equally interested in the people's and the political elite's perception of the "Russian issue". However, in order to better understand the development of relations between Bucharest and Moscow after 1990, we need to look back at history.

Gheorghe Bratianu, a Romanian historian who grew up in the French *Ecole des Annales*, says in a between the wars study<sup>2</sup> that the 1859 union of the Romanian Principalities and their 1877 political independence were connected to the English and French intervention in the dispute between the Ottoman empire and the Tsar's Russia over the Danube Delta. Romania became interesting for the West when the Ottomans were preparing to exit the stage, to be replaced by the Russians - a show to which Europe could not remain mere spectators. The year 1853 and the outbreak of the Crimean war witnessed French and English involvement in Eastern European affairs, especially concerning the need for free movement and trade on the Danube and the Black Sea.

Russia's first contact with the Principality of Moldova and hence the Romanian space was in 1711, when some Russian troops made the attempt to help the enlightened prince Dimitrie Cantemir in the fight against the Ottomans. But this was just a cover for the Russian interventions in the Romanian area that over time

became more numerous and Moscow's interests ever more pressing. Thus in 1775, Russia asked the other European powers to let her occupy the northern part of Moldova (Bukovina) but this Romanian region was allotted to the Austro-Hungarian Empire instead. However, to compensate for this, in 1812 Russia annexed the Eastern part of Moldova, ie the region between the Prut and Dniestr known as Bessarabia. Their rule there lasted until 1918 when northern Bukovina and Bessarabia were reintegrated into Romania in accordance with popular will.

After the Soviets came to power in Moscow in 1917, Russia started anew to expand into Central and South-Eastern Europe, this time basing her moves on another ideology, no longer the pan-Slavic and Byzantine one, but a world communism ideology. In 1924, preoccupied with the situation in Romania, the Bolshevik government created the so-called Soviet Republic of Moldova, a small enclave around the town of Tiraspol, on the right shore of the Dniestr. It was from there that Stalin prepared the military invasion of Bessarabia of June 1940. Romania responded the following year with the government's decision to wage war against the Soviet Union, ranging the country on the side of the German-Italian Axis. Most WWII historians agree that the Soviet Union would have started communizing Romania anyway, immediately after occupying it militarily, irrespective of Romania's stand (friend or foe) during the war. This actually happened after September 1944 when Soviet troops entered Romania. Important parts of Romanian territory remained as an aftermath of WWII within the Soviet Union (the north of Bukovina, nowadays a Ukrainian province, Bessarabia, nowadays the Republic of Moldova, a sovereign state since 1991, and Bender, a small portion north of the Danube Delta).

After 1945, Romanian-Russian relations entered the perverted logic of the Cold War. The Russian military occupation until 1958 was followed by a continuation of Russian influence until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. However, Romania showed - even within bloc politics - a certain degree of autonomy after 1965 and of independence, enhanced by Ceausescu after 1972. Thus since 1967 Romania promoted an opening towards the Western world (especially towards France and the FRG) and after 1970 a rapprochement of China and the USA. After this Romania did not take part in the military manoeuvres of the Warsaw Treaty. Ceausescu's communist nationalism ended by clashing with the political perestroika promoted by Gorbachev after 1985, isolating Romania more and more from both the Western capitals and Moscow.

In 1989, the changes of the "miraculous year" took place in Romania as well, Ceausescu's personal dictatorship ending in a violent manner. In 1990, Romania clearly chose democracy, a free market economy and integration to the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. For a large majority of the population this meant going back to the traditional alliances of the country, France and Great Britain (USA).<sup>3</sup>

Nowadays Romania's major challenges are related to transition, which is a painful experience from the domestic perspective and a difficult and tortuous integration process externally. During this period relations between Romania and Russia, although considered of secondary importance, had a say in reaching Romania's foreign policy objectives. Furthermore, the legacy of relations with Russia is a touchstone for the recent direction of Romanian foreign policy, although to a lesser extent for some other states, for instance the Baltic countries.

## **Romanian-Russian Relations in the Context of European & Euro-Atlantic Integration**

If we want to explain Romanian-Russian relations after 1990, we had better approach the issue from two standpoints. One would be the multilateral one, comprising the international initiatives and organizations in which Romania and Russia take part. The other is the bilateral relationship between these two countries.

The multilateral perspective shows that both Romania and Russia are members of the Organization for European Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and that after 1991 they both became members or associated partners of the main European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation institutions: the Council of Europe, the European Union and NATO's Partnership for Peace. In 2001, Romania became the president country of the OSCE. As one of the main points on this organization's agenda for quite a while now has been the relationship with Russia, this issue indirectly became of high concern for our country's foreign policy. Concerning the European Union, Romania has been an associate for several years. In December 1999 Romania was nominated in Helsinki among the countries with which accession negotiations would start. Romania's firm desire is to enter the European Union as soon as possible as a full member. As far as Russia is concerned, there are no chances in this respect in the near future.

This is the general trend of the two countries from the multilateral perspective. However, their relatively different positions within these organizations and on the general European level are far more important. We can say that Russia used most of the European organizations to approach the developments in the continent after the Cold War. The loss of its status as a "big power" created a serious handicap for Russian diplomacy: in order to voice her interests, Russia has now to negotiate with all the countries concerned, be they big or small, which makes her multiply her instruments of foreign policy. Russia aims at turning the OSCE into Europe's main collective security organization in order to lessen NATO's role as a collective defence organization and even to gradually eliminate the Alliance to extinction. As far as the OSCE and other European organizations such as the Council of Europe are concerned, Russia has adopted double-standard behaviour. For instance, when addressing the status of minorities, Russia imperiously asks for respect for the rights of the Russian minorities in countries such as Lithuania. On the other hand, however, the same respect for the rights of the non-Russian minorities of the Caucasian republics seems to be of far lesser importance. Moreover, Russia is always encroaching upon these rights, yet in Strasbourg she points to others violating them.

A main point on the agenda of the Romanian 2001 presidency of the OSCE was a constructive approach to certain urgent issues such as the withdrawal of the 14th Trans-Dniestr Army in Moldova, the respect for human rights and the cessation of the conflict in the Caucasus. These are issues requiring Russia's cooperation. According to the official position of the Romanian government, with the help of the cooperation potential of all European organizations, it is hoped that Russia will remain committed to the general process of European integration and of building a new Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

Nevertheless, if we look at Russia's "original" way of committing to the European issues, there is very little chance that Moscow will operate any major change in her diplomatic practice. Also, after Vladimir Putin became President, we have witnessed

changes of a different nature. Russia's new President was probably elected as a reaction by the bureaucrats facing the domestic and international erosion of their country's status. The nostalgia for the status of big power is quite obvious here, the first to show it being Putin and his team. He belongs to "the young wolves' generation", those who believe in business, in their powers, feeling no remorse at the communist period, not feeling responsible for the communist period and being only sorry that it contributed to Russia's decay. We can perceive here an ambitious attempt to reconquer the former space of Soviet influence, to which new ingredients are added, such as the strengthening of relations with states considered to be dangerous for international security, such as Iran and North Korea. From here to a return to the policy of enforcing its will from a position of strength there is only one degree, which Russia is not yet prepared to take. The temptation of the past is that of the big capitals of Europe and this puts Central and South-Eastern countries in a difficult position, given the still insufficient consolidation of these states after the Cold War. Romania is one of the countries which could have some difficulties if Russia again adopts a position of strength. Given this multilateral perspective, it is easier to look now for explanations for what works and what does not work in the bilateral relations of Bucharest and Moscow.

Immediately after 1990, the new government in Bucharest tried to promote a policy of "emancipation" from Russia. As an expression of the need to establish other types of political relations, in the autumn of 1990 President Ion Iliescu and the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Adrian Nastase signed a treaty with the agonizing Soviet Union. However this treaty did not come into force because of the dismantlement of the Soviet Union in the next year. But the significance of signing this treaty goes beyond a legal or diplomatic act. In its turn, Moscow wished to set its relations with the former "brother" states on a new basis, while the new democracies tried to use this opportunity to consolidate their independent status and to protect the new orientation of their foreign affairs. None of them fully succeeded in achieving all they wanted.

During this time more urgent issues of a practical nature influenced the evolution of Romanian-Russian relations. Here are two examples in this respect: the declaration of independence of the Republic of Moldova in August 1991 and the conflict in former Yugoslavia. Although President Ion Iliescu was suspected of pro-Soviet sympathizing, Romania was the first country which officially recognized the independence of the Republic of Moldova. The government of Bucharest initiated a series of contacts for rapprochement with this republic, although such decisions had been taken more under public pressure and less for reasons of political strategy. The crisis of the self-proclaimed Trans-Dniestr republic in 1992, when Russia overtly backed the separatist forces, was the first test as to Moscow's real intentions. In Russia's engagement in the process of managing the conflicts of the former Yugoslavia, time has shown that this was not a solution but rather a part of the problem. Backing up Milosevic's regime in Belgrade, and the peace-keeping troops with which Moscow participated in the SFOR (Bosnia) and KFOR (Kosovo) contingents were means by which Russia consolidated her presence to the southeast of Romania rather than diminishing it. From the geopolitical point of view, situated between two centres of conflict - Trans-Dniestr to the east and Yugoslavia southwest, in both of which Russians were more involved even than during the Cold War - Romania has good reason to worry.

## **The Republic of Moldova, Obstacle to Romanian-Russian Relations?**

The Republic of Moldova issue is part of the WWII legacy, namely the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov pact by which Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia divided their spheres of influence on the eve of the war, and that after 1945 were kept in place with Mr Churchill's consent in Yalta. The present consequences of this pact concern Romanian-Russian and Romanian-Ukrainian relations, more precisely part of the historical province of Bessarabia now belonging to Ukraine. More than 5 million Romanian speakers are nowadays on the other side of the Romanian borders. In 1991, the solution seemed to be the declaration of independence of the Republic of Moldova, the introduction of Romanian as an official language and the passage to the Latin alphabet. But in the long term, the consolidation of the Moldovan state has revealed itself to be quite difficult.

The viability of the new state, particularly from the economic point of view, was seriously put to the test because of the energy and food supplies coming from the former Soviet space: a dependence created during the communist period and gradually becoming a means of Russian political influence. To this was added the problem of Trans-Dniestr separatism, encouraged by leaders from the Kremlin. Under these circumstances, the Bucharest government could not (or would not) take a clear stand because this could also have meant interfering with the internal affairs of a sovereign state, the Republic of Moldova. Ion Ungureanu, minister of culture of the first democratic government of Chisinau, said that "Romania should not walk stealthily in Bessarabia".<sup>4</sup> The proclamation of independence of Moldova has from this point of view less productive aspects: under the cover of "sovereignty", Moldova's political elite, led by pro-Russian attitudes, can redirect the country according to its preferences.

Concluding the Bilateral Treaty with Ukraine (1997), although strongly criticized by domestic public opinion for ignoring the rights of the Romanian minority, contributed however to installing a stable and cooperative environment in the region. From this point of view, preoccupied with its objectives of integration into the European Union and NATO, Romania seems to neglect relations with the Republic of Moldova and lags behind with clarifying its relations with Russia from the legal point of view. However, important measures of the government and civil society contribute in a very significant way to the rapprochement of Romania and Moldova. The Bucharest government is helping the Republic of Moldova with non-reimbursable electric power, fuel and grain. At the same time many young people from Bessarabia are studying in Romania, public libraries of Moldova receive regular donations of Romanian books, the Moldovan press is actively engaged in reaffirming the national identity, while the Orthodox church is a means of spiritual reunification.

This was the situation at the end of 2000. Starting with 2001, the situation has completely changed. Affected by the accelerated degradation of living standards and by the failure of the moderate politics of Presidents Snegur and Lucinschi, the Moldovans accepted the election of the Communist Party led by Vladimir Voronin. As of February 2001 Chisinau has a president, a government and a parliament dominated by authoritarian communists and their allies. Moldova is the first former Soviet republic to fall victim to the coming back in strength of communists. Romanian public opinion considers this event as a major failure of the policy which aimed to change Eastern Europe. The Parliament of Bucharest even asked for a

public session on this topic. There are, however, concerns as to the political developments in the Republic of Moldova.

## **The Romanian Position on Romanian-Russian Relations: Public Opinion & Political Parties**

Even if Romanian-Russian relations are stated to be a priority for the important political forces in Romania, the actual situation is less obvious. Taking into consideration that in order to really “normalize” the relations with Moscow some differences have to be solved as far as both past and present are concerned, it is difficult to envisage this happening soon, given the recent developments in the Republic of Moldova. From the Romanian point of view, normalizing means clarifying Russia’s position towards the Romanian state treasury handed to Moscow for safekeeping in 1917<sup>5</sup>; withdrawing the Russian troops from the Trans-Dniestr area, in accordance with the international commitments undertaken by Russia; adopting a more flexible position concerning NATO enlargement and the integration of Southeast European countries to the European Union. Political forces in Bucharest can approach relations with Moscow only from this perspective.

Romanian public opinion has traditionally had a reserved attitude towards Russia. After 1990 public polls have shown a clear trend by the population towards establishing privileged relations with Western European countries (especially with France) and with the United States. Over 72% of the population is favourable to NATO integration while over 85% are in favour of rapid accession to the European Union. Less than 2% agree with strengthening relations with Russia<sup>6</sup>, doubtless meaning that there is a distrust of the political good intentions of Moscow. Of course, this attitude is based on past experience.

Romania’s political parties have adopted a more nuanced position toward Russia. The **Romanian Party of Social Democracy** (PDSR, now PSD), the most significant in numbers and the post-1990 ruling party (except for the period 1996-2000), descending from the pre-1989 state and party bureaucracy, has adopted the most qualified position possible. Resulting from the rift between the conservative group (represented by Ion Iliescu, the current President) and the reformers (represented by the Prime Minister Adrian Nastase), the range of positions within the PDSR are manifest in the sensitive issues of bilateral relations as well as in the public discussion of certain issues such as the bilateral treaty.

For the conservatives who governed between 1990 and 1996, the issue most debated by the media and the democratic opposition was their communist past and Ion Iliescu’s previous history: he had studied in the 1960s in the higher technical university in Moscow.<sup>7</sup> However a public scandal to which Ion Iliescu and the conservatives fell victim burst in 2000, just before the presidential and parliamentary elections. This was the “red line”, a hotline between Bucharest and Moscow at head of state level, which should have been installed in 1997 had Ion Iliescu not lost the elections. Apart from this, the conservative group of the PDSR adopted a reasonable position concerning Romanian-Russian relations. Ion Iliescu declared that he was in favour of the Republic of Moldova strengthening its independence. He underlined on several occasions that the Russian troops had to withdraw from the Trans-Dniestr and that he was ready to sign the Romanian-Russian basic treaty.



As far as the reformist group is concerned, Adrian Nastase has had a more practical approach to Romanian-Russian relations. Prime Minister Nastase, a former active euro-parliamentarian and in favour of EU integration, has shown himself to be in favour of developing relations with Moscow too if this helps Romania's European integration. He is well aware that the country's economic interests require a revival of exports to the Russian federation. Nevertheless, the instability of the Russian market and the sorry infrastructure - especially of banking - have impaired the development of sound economic bilateral relations, although Romanian companies have continued to try to find Russian business partners.

The **National Liberal Party**, offspring of the homonymous party which has had the longest governing periods in the entire Romanian history and currently the main parliamentary party in the opposition, although not visibly concerned with the development of Romanian-Russian relations has, however, adopted a well-balanced position. Its president since 2001, Valeriu Stoica, is not a political leader overtly interested in international relations. The party's political position is clearly pro-Western, coinciding with the attitude of the liberal intellectuals and of the new capitalists, as it depends on the development of business relations with western firms and companies. Although the liberal leaders' opposition to any attempt at tightening relations with Russia as a main point of Romania's foreign policy has not been shown clearly, with even the most positive initiatives they adopted an extremely careful attitude. As they are quite practical, liberals will sustain the development of political relations with Russia as soon as they can see an immediate or long-term profit.

The **Democrat Party** (PD) of the Mayor of Bucharest Traian Basescu (the new party president after Petre Roman) is currently undergoing changes in leadership and national structure. Competing in social-democrat doctrine with the PDSR although nowadays in opposition after four years of co-governing, the PD has cultivated extensive relations with European social-democrats and socialists. From this point of view, the attitude of the PD towards Russia is in line with the European trend: the left wing is generally open to developing relations with Moscow. However, former party president Petre Roman has been perceived as rather reticent towards Moscow, especially when he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1999-2000).

The **National Peasant Christian and Democrat Party** (PNTCD), worn-out by four governing years (1996-2000), has been generally blamed for the Democratic Convention failure in the 2000 elections. This party is now in opposition; it is busy reconstructing its ranks as it did not even meet the required parliamentary threshold. Andrei Marga, until recently the president of the PNTCD, is known as a pro-European who tried to develop a European Christian-Democratic identity for his party, vital for overcoming the hard times until the next elections. Victor Ciorbea, its new president much contested by one of the party's wings, is seriously dedicated to improving relationships with the European Christian-Democrats, in particular the German CDU. During their four governing years, although the PNTCD was not in charge of foreign affairs, the party did not support in any distinctive way Romanian-Russian initiatives or relations. Just as the PD did, the PNTCD adopted the European line of Christian Democrats and Popular Parties: Russia is an "issue" to be dealt with by a common European attitude. Furthermore, the Christian Democrats from Bucharest think that in order to meet the European and Euro-Atlantic requirements more quickly, Romania should first harmonize her policy towards the East to the general NATO and EU general principles.

The **Democratic Union of the Magyars from Romania** (UDMR), although legally registered as a cultural association of the Magyar ethnic minority of Romania, is actually a political party in behaviour. It participated in the government before 2000 together with the PNTCD, but it had good relations with the current governing party, the PDSR. That is because the Magyar minority party has its own political agenda: to obtain the most profitable status for the Magyar minority, who represent almost 7% of the country's population, more than 1.6 million citizens, no matter what party is in power. This explains the UDMR attempts to find political allies for the ethnic minority issue both inside and outside the country. From this point of view, in the same way as the government of Hungary does, this party is open to cooperate with Russia on ethnic minorities issues; like the Hungarians, there are many Russian ethnic groups living in numerous countries. This can explain to a certain extent the "marriage of convenience" between minority political parties or enterprises such as the Hungarian minority party and similar Russian organizations. Such alliances can often be seen, for example in the European Parliament.

The "**Romania Mare**" Party (Great Romania), led by Corneliu Vadim Tudor, has had the most "interesting" position as concerns Romanian-Russian relations. Vadim Tudor, an impulsive yet charismatic political leader, considered to be the big surprise of the November 2000 elections with more than 30% of the votes for his party, is at the same time the leader of an eclectic group comprising various nationalistic factions. To his nationalistic demagoguery has been added the populism promoted by the party's activists. This unique blend has brooded on the people's voiced discontent with the negative impact of the economic transition, with the increase in public corruption during the CDR rule and with the vain promises of Western countries. Vadim Tudor, a sort of Jean Marie le Pen of "Little Paris"<sup>8</sup> shows often and without any hesitation his reserve towards Western policy concerning Romania and has become more reluctant to express his opinion on Russia's political choice. The main objective of his nationalism is "Great Romania", without however implying any anti-Russian attitude. Moving away from the West is not necessarily dangerous if it triggers the unification of Romania and Moldova. Moreover, he would prefer to move even closer to Moscow if this helps to unify Romania with Moldova. All Vadim Tudor's obtrusive yet ineffective public demonstrations prove his political demagoguery; they however attract those deceived by the sorry economic results of the reforms and who suffer from visibly decreasing living standards. Paradoxically, Vadim Tudor was voted for not for his reunification promises, but rather as a result of the non-accomplished promises of the 1996-2000 coalition. Three months after the elections, Vadim Tudor and his party fell dramatically in the polls, to only 15%. Yet the potential remains. Only a successful furtherance of economic reform and a clear commitment to European integration can prevent Romania from being hostage to extremist forces.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Poujade to de Tocqueville, archives CCXXXIV, p. 251, apud Radu Rosetti, *Actiunea politicii rusesti in tarile romane, povestita de organele oficiale franceze* (The Impact of Russian Policy on the Romanian Principalities, According to French Officials), 1916, republished in 2000, Cartea Romaneasca, p140.

<sup>2</sup> Gheorghe Bratianu, "Geopolitica, factor educativ national", in *Geopolitica, Geoistoria. Revista Romana pentru Sud Estul European*, Bucharest, 1941, p5.

<sup>3</sup> December 1989: Bucharest. French reporters became aware that a large part of the population of the Romanian capital was actually speaking French. One of them, Jean Louis Calderon, was shot dead during the violent events of the revolution. For the Romanian

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people, Calderon represents the sacrifice of France for their freedom. The street where he died has had his name ever since.

<sup>4</sup> Marin Enache, Dorin Cimpoesu, *Misiune diplomatica in Republica Moldova 1993-1997* (Diplomatic Mission in the Republic of Moldova 1993-1997), Ed Polirom, Iasi, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> In 1917, during Romania's occupation by the Central Powers, the Romanian government signed a treaty with the Tsar's Russia in order to find a temporary repository for the Romanian treasury. However, after the Bolshevik revolution, the Kremlin did not recognise this treaty and refused to give back even pieces that had belonged to the national cultural heritage such as the Crown Jewels. Russia's attitude has remained the same even after 1990.

<sup>6</sup> These data were taken from a poll on a national sample conducted by the Metromedia Transylvania Institute at the end of February 2001. For a view of public opinion dynamics visit the Soros Foundation site: [www.soros.ro](http://www.soros.ro)

<sup>7</sup> Other persons around the President, such as General Vasile Ionel, a graduate from the Soviet "Frunze" Military Academy and Iliescu's adviser on national security matters between 1990 and 1996 reinforced the image of "communism nostalgia" of the PDSR conservative wing. Vasile Ionel and Nicolae Militaru, together with other career officers, had been suspected by Ceausescu of being "from the Russian side". After 1990, the entire corps of generals isolated by Nicolae Ceausescu came back to the forefront of the Romanian political arena. Nicolae Militaru was the first Minister of Defence during the interim government formed on 22nd December 1989.

<sup>8</sup> "Little Paris" was the between-the-wars name given to Bucharest, since the two capitals bore many similarities in architecture.

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