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POLAND'S PERSPECTIVE ON ANGLO-FRENCH SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR ROMANIA (APRIL-AUGUST 1939)

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The study analyzes the diplomatic dynamics surrounding Romanian-Polish relations and British-French guarantees to Romania in 1939, as Europe approached World War II. Poland was hesitant to include Romania in the broader Anglo-French security architecture, fearing this might push Hungary further into Germany's sphere of influence. Despite British and French efforts to forge a stronger military alliance between Poland and Romania, these initiatives largely failed. Poland's foreign minister, Józef Beck, argued against formal security guarantees for Romania, citing concerns about maintaining good relations with Hungary and the weakness of Romania's military. Additionally, Beck believed that Poland did not need to be bound by additional obligations, as its focus was on its own security. Romanian officials, led by Foreign Minister Grigore Gafencu, initially supported a westward reorientation of their alliance but hesitated to provoke Germany. Despite discussions about transforming the Romanian-Polish alliance into a broader defense pact against all aggressors (erga omnes), no concrete actions were taken. Both Romania and Poland were reluctant to commit to mutual defense against Germany, leading to the collapse of Western efforts to establish a stronger security framework in Eastern Europe. The failure to implement this strategy contributed to the vulnerabilities both nations faced in the early stages of the war.

Keywords*: Poland, Romania, Anglo-French guarantees, Józef Beck, Grigore Gafencu, Hungary, Germany, erga omnes, alliance, security architecture, World War II.*

ATITUDINEA POLONIEI FAȚĂ DE IMPLICAREA ROMÂNIEI ÎN SECURITATEA EUROPEANĂ (APRILIE-AUGUST 1939)

Studiul analizează dinamica legăturii dintre relațiile româno-polone, pe de o parte, și garanțiile anglo-franceze acordate României în 1939, pe măsură ce Europa se apropia de al Doilea Război Mondial. Polonia a ezitat să includă România în arhitectura de securitate anglo-franceză, temându-se că acest lucru ar putea împinge Ungaria și mai mult în sfera de influență a Germaniei. În ciuda eforturilor britanice și franceze de a consolida o alianță militară între Polonia și România, aceste inițiative au eșuat în mare parte. Ministrul polonez de externe, Józef Beck, s-a opus acordării unor garanții formale de securitate pentru România, invocând necesitatea de a menține bunele relații cu Ungaria și slăbiciunea armatei române. De asemenea, Beck considera că Polonia nu avea nevoie de noi obligații suplimentare, din perspectiva intereselor sale naționale. Oficialii români, conduși de ministrul de externe Grigore Gafencu, au susținut inițial reorientarea alianței cu Polonia către Vest, dar au ezitat să provoace Germania. Deși au existat discuții despre transformarea alianței româno-poloneze într-un pact de apărare mai larg împotriva tuturor agresorilor (erga omnes), nu s-au luat măsuri concrete. Atât România, cât și Polonia au fost reticente să își asume angajamente reciproce de apărare împotriva Germaniei, ceea ce a dus la eșecul eforturilor occidentale de a stabili un cadru de securitate mai puternic în Europa de Est. Eșecul implementării acestei strategii a contribuit la vulnerabilitățile cu care cele două națiuni s-au confruntat în primele etape ale războiului.

Cuvinte-cheie*: Polonia, România, garanții anglo-franceze, Józef BECK, Grigore Gafencu, Ungaria, Germania, erga omnes, alianță, arhitectură de securitate, Al Doilea Război Mondial.*

Poland's perspective on its relations with Romania on the eve of the Second World War, was never thoroughly approached by researchers as a distinct topic, although many historians have attempted to integrate its understanding into a more general picture of the circumstances of the outbreak of the war, or of the British and French efforts to set up a security architecture.

Beyond the attitude of Romania itself, in relation to the possibility of becoming an integral part of the security architecture that the French, but especially the British, undertook to build in Europe after the occupation of Prague, an important obstacle to the inclusion of Romania in the system proposed by the British

at the end of March 1939, was Poland's attitude. The Poles were not happy with the indicated format of the guarantees proposed by the British for Romania, despite the assurances given to his Romanian colleagues by the Polish ambassador in London, Edward Raczyński, that Poland wanted its alliance with Romania to be also directed against the threats coming from the west [1]. The Poles opposed the British initiative for Romania to be granted security guarantees in exchange for the latter's acceptance of the British request for an *erga omnes* reorientation of the Polish-Romanian Alliance from 1921, citing, first of all, the concern that it does not, in this way, push Hungary into the arms of the Germans. Even though, during his visit to London from April 4-6, undertaken to translate into precise provisions the guarantees offered to the Poles by the British on March 31, Beck tried to convince Tilea that Poland's attitude towards the revisionist claims the Hungarian government was that of total support for the territorial integrity of Romania[2], British diplomatic documents confirm the fact that the foreign minister of Poland sought to inoculate the British government with the perception that the granting of security guarantees to Romania, or the establishment of an Anglo-French-Polish agreement to support military forces of Romania in case of necessity, could have the effect of definitively pushing Hungary into the arms of Germany, in the circumstances in which Beck imagined that there existed chances that Budapest could remain outside the orbit of Berlin, and ,,the Polish government did not want to lose the political capital it had in Budapest. Beck's attitude towards the dilemma of the weight of the Polish-Romanian relations against the Polish-Hungarian ones was expressively summarized by him when he showed the British that, while ,,Romania was Poland's ally, Hungary was her friend" [3].

Romanian diplomats were informed that Beck had let the British understand that he was not willing to give aid to Romania against a threat from the West, motivating this decision by the fact that such a step would have harmed his very good relations with Hungary [4], with which he had just had participated in the partition of Czechoslovakia by contributing to the promotion of those methods of action to which, in a short time, Poland itself would fall victim [5]. In fact, Beck did not give Chamberlain any concrete answer to the latter's question of whether or not Poland wanted ,,Romania to be left, for the time being, out of any arrangement", referring to the fact that such an answer could not be given it only after having consulted with the Romanian government in this regard and mentioning only that he was against ,,a too rigid system... in this part of the world" which ,,[referring to Hungary] could have closed the door favorable developments and compromises future possibilities" [6]. However, it should be added, in relation to these observations, the fact that Beck declared himself ready to ,,support" Romania if it would have rejected a German ultimatum and would have been, as a consequence, attacked, but he spoke against the pre-establishment of what exactly this ,,support" should have meant and how it should be have been granted. The British argument that, without the pre-establishment of these aspects, the chances of Romania rejecting a German ultimatum decreased considerably, did not move Beck, who emphasized that, in this Bucharest alone was the one to decide, and his concern was to take into account, concerning this issue, the fact that in the event of a German attack against Poland, the help that Romania could have given to the latter was ,,negligible" but also because, if the Germans had occupied Romania, the situation would not have changed much for the Poles, who anyway had nothing to fear from the Hungarians, nor did they need Romanian oil that much to carry on the war, having made enough supplies of fuel [7]. It is no wonder why the Romanian government considered that it would not have been prudent to ask Warsaw officially the question regarding the assistance it could hope for from its Polish Allies in the event of a German attack, given that the Romanian ambassador, Franassovici he shared with his French counterpart from that capital his opinion that Poland would not have come to Romania's aid [8].

During his visit to London, Beck also discussed the issue with A. Eden, the latter being left with the impression that the Polish statesman was ,,far from being impatient to see Romania treated on an equal footing with Poland", an attitude that the British attributed partly to ,,Poland's predilection for the role of a great power", and partly to the concern to ensure its own security rather than that of its neighbors. Eden suspected (and these suspicions were also shared by Halifax with his colleagues in the government [9]) the fact that the Poles refused to include Romania in a system like the one proposed by the British, based upon the calculation that, in the event that Romania would have remained outside an arrangement of security, Germany's attack would most likely have been directed against her and not theirs [10].

Beck’s visit to London ended with a preliminary Polish-British agreement on mutual assistance that left open the possibility that, in the future official agreement, a clause would be inserted stipulating the obligatory Polish support to Romania in case it was threatened, although the Poles insisted on the fact that they considered it „premature to comment on the desirability of including Romania in the official agreement” [11]. Another interesting clause of this preliminary agreement was that Poland reserved the right not to consider itself bound in any way by any other obligations that Great Britain might assume in Eastern Europe [12], and although this provision applied primarily to the British initiative of rapprochement with the USSR, it could equally be applied to the proposal made by the British to the Romanians on March 31 (of joining the system of guarantees), but also to London’s intention to attract to its side the member states of the Balkan Entente that, through Romania, the British hoped to be able to link to Poland[13] and thus implement a new European security system that would act as a chain stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean and Black Seas and to the Straits.

French diplomatic documents confirm the fact that in London, Beck expressed his desire that the issue of the Romanian-Polish alliance be discussed by Romania „directly” with Poland (indeed, even the Romanians had not authorized him to discuss the issue with the English) and showed himself to be „hostile” to the connection, in one way or another, of Romania to the British guarantee Poland received on March 31, on the grounds that this step would have pushed Hungary into Germany’s arms. Even though Beck was referring to the fact that the issues related to the Romanian-Polish alliance had to be discussed primarily between London and Bucharest, his attempts to avoid broadening the scope of this discussion betrayed his desire to see Bucharest deal with the Western Powers through Warsaw in an attempt to subordinate the Romanian foreign policy to the goals of the Polish one [14]. The conclusion of the French foreign minister, Bonnet, following Beck’s visit to London, was that the Poles would not have offered a security guarantee to Romania except at its express request and as a result of direct Romanian-Polish negotiations. Thus, given the „capital importance” that the French foreign minister attached to the updating of Romanian-Polish security relations, on April 10, 1939, Bonnet asked Bucharest to proceed to direct negotiations in this regard with Warsaw [15].

Forced by the French and contrary to their resolution to grant security guarantees to Romania only in the event of the transformation of the Romanian-Polish Alliance into an *erga omnes* to integrate, in this way, Bucharest into a quadripartite Anglo-French-Polish-Romanian security system and in which they hoped to later attract other Eastern European countries, mainly Turkey and, in the most favorable case, the USSR, the British finally agreed to unilaterally grant guarantees Romania’s security, a gesture that contradicted the entire reasoning just outlined. Through an official statement given the very next day, the Polish Government noted that they „observed with friendly interest the position adopted by Great Britain” but did not hesitate to dissociate themselves from this gesture, emphasizing that the Franco-British guarantees offered to Romania did not create for Poland either some kind of new obligations under the already existing arrangements with France and Great Britain [16]. The Romanian Embassy in Warsaw also transmitted to the R.M.F.A that the Polish official sources „specified that the Franco-English guarantee granted to Romania does not create new commitments for Poland” [17]. That Poland distanced itself (and perhaps even felt offended by the Franco-British guarantees which the Poles seem to have regarded almost as an intrusion into the sphere of their interests) is clear from the note sent on the same day by the Polish Ambassador to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in which it was shown that although the Polish government „did not see an inconvenience” in the declaration stating the guarantees, it nevertheless emphasized that „the declaration did not in any way affect the current obligations of Poland towards Romania” and concluded pointedly that „it will be of the duty of the Romanian Government to contact the Polish Government” [18]. This attitude was due to the fact that Beck considered, as he also declared to Kennard (British Ambassador in Warsaw), the granting of security guarantees to Romania as a „tactical” mistake and an „eminently platonic” gesture, since he believed that, in any case, the Romanians were not capable of finding the strength to oppose the aggression [19]. Thus, the official reaction of the Poles to the Franco-British guarantees offered to Romania was rather negative, and, in particular, Beck did not shy away from stating to the British that the respective step had been „a mistake”, accusing the latter of compromising the chances of Polish stratagems to prevent Hungary from definitively entering the Axis orbit.

Under these conditions, the British embassy in Warsaw was right to estimate that it would be very difficult to convince Beck of the opportunity to transform the Romanian-Polish alliance into an *erga omnes* one, the Polish statesman considering that the British reasoning according to which Romania was „the vital point within the system we are trying to create" and the element that bound Poland to the Balkan Entente, was too little compatible with Poland's national interests [20]. The French Embassy in Warsaw shared the British opinion in this regard, which the French also reached after Beck confirmed to Léon Noël (the French ambassador) on April 12, 1939, that he had refused to discuss, during his visit to London, the question of interpretation of the Romanian-Polish treaties; the head of the French diplomatic mission reporting home (based on information collected from the Polish ruling circles), that Beck was already aware at that time that "he had nothing more to expect from Hungary", but that pride prevented the Polish statesman to recognize the fact that he had been mistaken in the high expectations it had tied the objective of establishing a common border with Hungary, which he had persistently pursued in the process of dismembering Czechoslovakia.

The fact that not only Poland, but also Romania, was in absolutely no hurry to follow through on the British project of transforming the Romanian-Polish alliance into an *erga omnes* one can be traced easily, Thierry reproaching Gafencu in this regard, the very next day after the announcement of the guarantees, that Romania, „more than anyone" should have understood the importance of this project for the security architecture that the Western Allies sought to put in place after the occupation of Czechoslovakia and Albania, and that „the reluctance of Bucharest to to engage in consultations with Warsaw was not only likely to produce the worst effect in the Western capitals' but to endanger this whole scaffold which the French and English were endeavoring to build; Thierry did not exaggerate the importance of the westward reorientation of the Polish-Romanian alliance as a link in this chain which Paris and London were trying to forge, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, to deter Axis aggression in that direction. Gafencu gave in to these arguments, informing him that he intended to instruct Franassovici to invoke in Warsaw, in the context of the escalation of Romanian-Hungarian tensions in those days, Article 1 of the Romanian-Polish Alliance Treaty of 1921 which stipulated that Poland and Romania undertook to respect and support each other, against any external aggression, territorial integrity and political independence; on the other hand, article 2, par. 4 of the same treaty stipulated that the modalities for the execution of these provisions will be the subject of technical arrangements; et at that time the respective technical arrangements only concerned the Soviet threat. Gafencu's argument, to take that step, was that it was necessary to put the matter in formal terms, to force Beck to react so that the updating of these technical arrangements could somehow be kicked off and, in the end, to reach a common understanding concerning the method of action against the German threat [21].

Although, upon his return from London, Beck communicated to the French that he had instructed the Polish ambassador in Bucharest to raise the issue of the Romanian-Polish Alliance in the sense desired by the British and French [22], the French ambassador in Warsaw had the impression that Beck's reaction to the official Romanian approach to update the military convention that accompanied the alliance treaty betrayed the fact that he did not want to engage Poland in relation to the possibility of a Hungarian aggression against Romania [23]. Léon Noël's impression was confirmed by Franassovici, who conveyed to Gafencu that Beck's answer to his approach was that, although Article I of the treaty of alliance had a general character, it was nevertheless, by virtue of the military convention accompanying it, directed only against the Soviet danger; Beck also told the Romanian that he considered that the Romanian approach created a new situation that „required a more extensive political and military study and could not be reduced to a technical arrangement" and that he was willing to discuss the issue with Gafencu, but that the policy followed by Poland would continue to be one of avoiding the „provocation" or „encirclement" of Germany[24]. Curiously, in exactly the same days, the Polish embassy in Paris accused the Romanian government was the one delaying the Romanian-Polish negotiations and declared that the Polish government was prepared, on the basis of reciprocity, to accept the Anglo-French request on the reorientation of the Romanian-Polish alliance [25].

The discussions initiated in this way were very anemic from the beginning, the French noting that Beck was not very interested in their suggestions and those of the English regarding the Romanian-Polish alliance, suggestions which he countered with observations from which it followed that his opinion was that Romania would not have found the courage to defend itself or that the Romanian response would have

been insignificant in any case. The French diplomats in Warsaw believed that Beck's concern was actually to justify to the Polish public opinion the failure of the attempt to prevent Hungary's alignment with Hitler's policy, a failure that he did not hesitate to portray as the inevitable result of the Anglo-French guarantees offered to Romania[26]. The Secretary General of the French MFA, Alexis Léger, was of the opinion that Poland's reluctance to transform the Romanian alliance into an *erga omnes* was dictated by a hidden motive, namely Beck's intention to channel the German threat „to the south of Poland, i.e. on Romania" [27]. On the other hand, the British ambassador in Warsaw, Kennard, observed the fact that the Poles were „probably" right when they treated with skepticism the capacity of the Romanian army, this being one of the reasons why they did not want to further deepen and broaden the Polish-Romanian alliance that they had long considered as one of unequal benefits and reported to the Foreign Office the opinion of his French counterpart that the Allies should send a strong military mission to Bucharest to help the Romanians put their house in order in this regard [28].

The information regarding subsequent Romanian-Polish contacts to discuss the possibility of a westward reorientation of their alliance is often confusing and even contradictory. The conclusion we can draw in this regard was that none of the parties sincerely wanted to take this step, even if, in their contacts with the Western Allies, both the Poles, and especially the Romanians, avoided displaying their true intentions. British documentary sources attest to the fact that during Gafencu's visit to Poland on April 17 (as part of the European tour undertaken by the Romanian minister that spring [29]), he could not reach any important conclusion with Beck on the issue of the functioning of the Romanian-Polish Alliance, as the two only managed to agree on the fact that the Alliance only targeted Russia as a potential aggressor, but that, in the event of the appearance of signs of German aggression "or other aggression", Warsaw and Bucharest would immediately proceed to discussions to determine the actions to be undertaken jointly; at the same time, and this also reflects Romania's reluctance to move forward on the path of solving this problem, Beck and Gafencu had agreed „„not to insist for the moment too much on the matter in order not to publicize it" so as not to antagonize Germany in this way [30].

Despite these modest results of the April 17 meeting, the Romanian embassy in Warsaw reported to the RMFA Gafencu's message that Beck had accepted, in principle, his thesis that the Romanian-Polish alliance already had an *erga omnes* character, and that „a technical agreement would be discussed and concluded at the appropriate time" [31]. The French embassy in Warsaw also confirms that, during his transit through Warsaw to Berlin and the capitals of the Western Allies, Gafencu discussed with Beck on April 17 the problem of interpreting the Romanian-Polish alliance, but that the mentioned discussion was ultimately summed up in an agreement in principle on the fact that, theoretically, that alliance had an *erga omnes* character, without any of the two foreign ministers showing the desire to proceed with the implementation of the desired [32]. On April 20, the problem was discussed by Thierry with the General Secretary of RMFA, Al. Cretzianu, the French ambassador stated that the Western Allies, even if they had offered guarantees to Romania, were still concerned with the need to integrate the Romanian-Polish alliance into the system focused on deterring German aggression, but Cretzianu told him that he considered that „it is too much importance to this formal matter, given the fact that, as he [Thierry] must know, by the fact that Poland and Romania each benefit from Franco-British guarantees, which means that an attack against one of them would trigger the general war, and we cannot imagine a hypothesis in which Poland or Romania would be the victim of an aggression, without being brought to fight side by side". However, the situation that Cretzianu declared in April that he could not imagine, would become a desired one by the Romanian government, which proves that the English and French were right not to trust the assurances of the Romanians and to insist on the need to formalize the reorientation towards the west of the Romanian-Polish alliance [33].

During his visit to London from April 23-26, however, Gafencu gave, to Halifax's satisfaction, the assurance that Romania agreed that the Romanian-Polish alliance should become one *erga omnes* one, informing the Secretary of State that he had reached an agreement in principle with Beck (in the framework of his aforementioned meeting with the Polish minister), only remaining for the military to establish the technical details for this purpose, without the need to modify the alliance treaty of 1921 in order not to give the Germans additional reasons to complain that they are „surrounded". What is remarkable is that a time-

table for this process had not been agreed upon by the two statesmen [34], and to Halifax's question in this regard, Gafencu replied that his opinion was that Beck would have let the negotiations begin when be convinced that, as far as Germany was concerned, „all was lost"; As for the possibility of a Hungarian attack against Romania, it was not clear whether Beck considered it covered by the new Polish-Romanian verbal agreement, but the answer to this question seems rather to be negative, as the Polish statesman communicated to Gafencu his opinion that, in that event, Romania could manage on its own, but also the fact that he believed (and subsequent events proved him right) that, in the event that Germany attacked Poland, Romania would have been more concerned with securing borders against his other revisionist neighbors and could not have done much to come to the aid of his ally, which is why Beck rhetorically wondered in front of Gafencu what could be the real purpose of reorienting their alliance to the west.

Thus, although Gafencu assured Halifax that his verbal agreement with Beck on April 17 was „a definite step towards achieving what Paris and London wanted" [35], the British remained with the more correct impression that „nothing concrete had come out of that meeting" [36]. The correctness of this impression is also confirmed by the sources that reflect the almost immediate contacts of the Polish embassy in Bucharest, its secretary - Poninski, informing Cretzianu on April 21 that Beck and Gafencu „.. have agreed on the following points: 1) the technical part of the treaty should not be touched 2) the political aspect of the treaty must also remain unchanged"; therefore, from all the above it can be concluded that, apart from the verbal understanding that Gafencu and Beck agreed that, theoretically, the Romanian-Polish alliance was one *erga omnes,* there could have also a second tacit agreement, which assumed that the two parties will not undertake concrete actions for the practical realization of the first agreement. The French ambassador in London was of the opinion that, even if, in his discussions with Gafencu, Halifax showed the latter that Romania should not consider, in the event that Poland became the target of Germany's determined threat, that it could avoid the danger, however, the Secretary of state „had not made too much of an effort" to convince his interlocutor of the necessity of preparing the Romanian-Polish alliance for any eventuality [37].

During his stays in Paris and London, Gafencu promised Halifax and Bonnet to let them know when the expected Romanian-Polish military convention to be concluded, on the condition that they would keep the signing of that act a secret. When Bonnet stated that keeping such a convention strictly secret would have been an inconvenience to Anglo-French policy, referring to the fact that Turkey had announced that she would not enter into commitments until the scope of the Polish-Romanian alliance had been extended to West, Gafencu promised to notify the Turks himself when the military convention would have been signed [38].

Despite Gafencu's assurances, Romanian diplomats confirm the fact that after the meeting between Beck and Gafencu in April, no negotiations took place between the General Staff of the Romanian Army and that of the Polish Army to set up those „technical arrangements" by virtue of which the Polish-Romanian Alliance could, in fact, become an *erga omnes* one*,* Beck still remaining of the opinion that this would not have been necessary since he considered that against Hungary, Romania could defend itself and the support that the latter could render to Poland in the event of a German attack was illusory, especially since Bucharest would have to permanently maintain troops on the western and southern borders [39]. The lack of desire to proceed to concrete steps was characteristic of both parties, however, this being showcased by Romanian Prime Minister, Călinescu, who, at Thierry's insistence on the need to sign the additional military convention to the alliance treaty with the Poles and which would have broadened its scope in the western direction, communicated to the French ambassador that he was satisfied with the „agreement in principle" between Beck and Gafencu (from April 17) on the *erga omnes* character of that alliance, the Romanian Prime Minister stating to Thierry on April 27, 1939 that the relations between the Romanian General Staff and the and the Polish were so close that such a convention could have been agreed upon and signed, in case of necessity, within 24 hours, and the signing of such a convention would sooner or later have become known to the Germans, and could have provoked the aggression that both the Poles and the Romanians sought to avoid [40].

A significant detail related to the desire of England and France to see the reinvention of the Romanian-Polish alliance is related to the fact that Gafencu had instructed Tătărescu (Romanian Ambassador in Paris) to inform Bonnet that, during his recent meeting with Beck on the way to Berlin, not only the two foreign

ministers had agreed, in principle, that the Romanian-Polish alliance was directed against any aggressor but also on the fact that it would be activated, concretely, if Germany attacked Romania or Poland, Beck and Gafencu giving their mutual assurances of military aid in that eventuality, an understanding that was to maintain a character of „rigorous strictness”; the Polish ambassador to France presented the matter to Bonnet in similar terms. At the beginning of May 1939, however, Beck would deny the existence of such an agreement, suggesting to the French ambassador that the verbal agreement of April 17 was limited only to the provision that „in case of necessity, Poland and Romania would immediately agree on the measures that they had to be taken”; until then, however, Beck „continued to refuse” the signing of a new convention implementing the Romanian-Polish Treaty of Alliance. Learning of this, Bonnet decided to make use of the „right” conferred by France's military commitments in relation to Poland to ask Beck to clarify his position, conveying to him that it was important that in London, Paris, Moscow and Ankara there should be no doubt about regarding the Romanian-Polish decision to interpret their alliance in an „essential” sense for the security architecture that England and France were aiming to build [41]. On May 11, Beck specified that Poland refused „at least for the moment” to supplement the Romanian-Polish alliance treaty with a convention applicable in the event of a German aggression, motivating this decision by „the difficulty of foreseeing, in advance, the conditions of intervention of Polish troops south of the Carpathians”. Apart from this, Beck also concretized Poland's position by showing that, in the event that Hungary attacked Romania alone, the Poles would not have intervened in the conflict since, according to Beck, the Romanians, who (again, according to Beck) considered themselves able to defend against the Hungarians, they did not ask them to do so. Therefore, it is clear that the objective of the *erga omnes* character for the Romanian-Polish alliance was failing. At the same time, Beck pointed out to the French ambassador that, if Germany attacked Romania, then, by virtue of the Anglo-Polish, and Franco-Polish commitments and those assumed by London and Paris on April 13, such an attack would result in a generalized conflict in which Poland would have fought on Romania's side, thus also insisting on this path that a Romanian-Polish military convention was unnecessary [42]. However, Beck made no mention of the possibility of Romania's intervention in support of Poland, England and France in the event of a German attack against the Poles, which shows that the Polish statesman did not consider such a possibility. Therefore, things were very far from the colors in which Gafencu tried to paint them to the French and the English and in which the latter would have liked to see them, that is, that Romania and Poland would have committed, even informally, to support each other in the event of a German attack. But despite the stagnation of the Romanian-Polish negotiations regarding the issue of a new interpretation of the alliance in question, in the Anglo-French discussions from the beginning of May 1939, the objective of ensuring the westward orientation of the Polish-Romanian alliance appears in the Western documentary sources as having been achieved, the French being of the opinion that it was „extremely plausible” that, in the event of a German attack against Poland or Romania, the two countries would provide each other with military aid [43].

Anglo-French sources continued to emphasize during this period the fact that an essential reason why the Poles were reluctant to strengthen their political-military ties with the Romanians was the bad opinion they had of the capabilities of the Romanian army, the Poles valuing the combative abilities of the Romanian peasants, but not those of the officer corps and being, at the same time, concerned about the technical and material endowment of the Romanian armed forces[44]. But this attitude of the Poles, such as it was, should have suited the Romanians perfectly, or, at least, that's what they thought at the time - that it suited them. Indeed, in this regard, Călinescu pointed out to the French (in a discussion in which Carol had also participated) from the first days of May 1939 that a military intervention by the Romanians in support of the Poles, in the event of a German attack, had to be regarded as undesirable due to the weakness of the Romanian army and the probable consequence of drawing Hungary into the conflict on the side of Germany. The French, however, responded (anticipating correctly the events) that in such a situation, the price of maintaining neutrality could only be that of sacrificing sovereignty and ceding to the Germans total control over Romanian oil and grain, without which Berlin could not hope to win the war [45].

The issue of the Romanian-Polish alliance returned to the agenda of the Anglo-Romanian discussions on May 23, 1939, in Geneva, during Cretzianu's negotiations with Halifax, on which occasion the Romanian

informed the Secretary of State about the fact that the Poles had already given signs to the Romanians that they didn't intend to implement the verbal agreement between Gafencu and Beck, which recognized the general nature of the Romanian-Polish Alliance Agreement and undertook to add, „at a convenient time", those technical amendments that would have made it operable in the event of a German attack. In fact, Gafencu instructed Cretizanu to show the French and English that on May 19, 1939, the Polish ambassador in Bucharest had delivered a note to the Romanian government expressing concern that the „widening" of the Polish-Romanian alliance might have as an effect „definitively influencing Hungary's attitude", but that he, Gafencu, had rejected that approach on the grounds that Hungary was already „one hundred percent included in the Axis, but also because that approach „did not correspond to what was agreed upon by the Gafencu and Beck when they agreed that the Romanian-Polish treaty is a general treaty and that therefore the question of its enlargement cannot be raised, but only the question of concluding some technical arrangements that can be negotiated in secret outside of any political arrangements" [46], [47]. It seems to be obvious, at this stage, that the Romanians did not want to make commitments in relation to Poland against Germany, but they excused themselves in this sense, referring to the even more obvious reluctance, in this regard, of the Poles to assume the same commitments to the Romanians.

Despite Beck's clarifications or the reluctance expressed by Călinescu and Carol, the French continued in January 1940 to refer to the conversation between Beck and Gafencu on April 17 that took place on the train between Krakow and Katowice, in which the two agreed that the Romanian-Polish alliance was „in principle" an *erga omnes* one, as an achievement equivalent to the de facto westward orientation of that framework of Polish-Romanian political-military collaboration [48]. Equally interesting is the fact that the researched sources show that, during the months of June and July, the French and the British almost did not make any additional efforts to reform the Polish-Romanian alliance, and although it seems difficult to imagine that, considering the importance of the topic, that could have simply have been a proof of negligence on the part of the Western diplomacy, it seems that, essentially, that was the situation. The reason why Bonnet and Halifax let the situation „get out of hand" in this regard is that they were misled by assurances that the Beck-Gafencu verbal agreement of 17 April 1939 would have been sufficient, although Halifax and Bonnet still bear the responsibility of having let themselves be deceived in this respect.

Regarding the possibility of transforming the Romanian-Polish alliance into an *erga omnes* one, through its reorientation towards the West, it can be said that Romania's position changed significantly towards August 1939, and this is attested not only in Romanian sources but also in Western ones. In the context of the escalation of international tension, Gafencu communicated to the diplomatic representations of France, England, and Turkey in Bucharest on August 10, 1939, that the information he had from Berlin indicated a potential German aggression against Poland, as well as towards the south-east, with Romania as the main objective. He stated, at the same time, that Romania, despite the precarious situation of the endowment of its military forces, had the intention to defend itself „to the end", although Gafencu admitted that he had doubts about the ability of the Romanian state to resist successfully, and the French ambassador from Bucharest estimated that these „disclosures" by Gafencu had the actual role of conveying to the Western Allies the feeling that Romania wanted to know how and under what specific conditions it could count on the materialization of the guarantees of April 13, 1939 [49]. During that period, military tensions on Romania's border with Hungary increased significantly, and Carol's government saw the issue of reinterpreting the Romanian-Polish alliance as an opportunity to strengthen its position in relation to the increasingly aggressive Hungarians, but this initiative had, in those circumstances, even less chance of success, considering the Polish-Hungarian relations. But when, at the beginning of August 1939, Halifax would ask de Tilea about the progress made in terms of upgrading the Romanian-Polish alliance, the Romanian minister was forced to inform the Secretary of State that it was null, and laid the responsibility for that on Beck, „who had not made any move in this direction" out of the desire not to upset Hungary [50]. From other British sources, we learn that the argument put forward by the Poles in those days for their refusal to convert the Polish-Romanian alliance into one directed against any aggressor, was that the Poles were of the opinion that such an action was not necessary, for, in their assessment, Hungary would not have allowed Wehrmacht to transit its territory in the direction of Romania. The British did not agree with this reasoning and considered that such

a possibility could not be excluded [51], and in the instructions sent to the British mission in Moscow from August 1939, the British noted that they were putting „pressure on the Poles to take steps to coordinate their defense with that of Romania” [52].

The fact that the Turks were also interested in a western reorientation of the Romanian-Polish Alliance is confirmed by the diplomatic documents of the British embassy in Ankara that reflect Carol's visit to Turkey in August 1939, on which occasion the Turkish president İsmet İnönü insisted that Romania sign an agreement with Poland to provide for the „automatic” activation of the alliance in the event of a German aggression, while Carol avoided making any commitment in this regard, referring to the old pretext of the need to avoid antagonizing the Germans, but also to the fact that the Poles did not want such a convention that could draw them into a Romanian-Hungarian conflict [53];

Therefore, the objective of British foreign policy to reorient the Romanian-Polish Alliance remained unfulfilled. The French Embassy in Bucharest acknowledged this situation on August 12, 1939, but the French Chargé d'Affaires also signaled that, since Romania „felt militarily isolated”, and Polish-German relations were becoming more and more tense, favorable conditions had been created for a new attempt in this regard. The problem was, however, that Poland had rejected a Romanian proposal (made, however, with reference to the Hungarian danger) in this regard a few weeks earlier and therefore it was unlikely that, under those conditions, that effort would have been resumed on the Romanian side, which is why the French in Bucharest had taken the initiative in this regard, probing the position of the Polish ambassador - Count Raczynski - who had declared himself in agreement with the fact that „Poland no longer had any reason to appease Germany” and that Warsaw and Bucharest had to overcome that „paradoxical” situation for them as, military allies [54]. It is unclear whether this initiative had any follow-up. On the other hand, there is documentary confirmation that Carol did not want, in August 1939, the expansion of the Romanian-Polish alliance to cover the possibility of German aggression. The Romanian documents that reflect Carol's visit to Turkey in August 1939, show that when Turkish President İsmet İnönü asked if he, Carol, did not intend to reorient the Polish-Romanian alliance to the west, the latter replied that the Poles did not want this in order to not attract the antipathy of the Hungarians, but that he, himself, did not want it either, considering «the extension of the treaty...disadvantageous and superfluous. Disadvantageous, because contrary to Romania›s will to maintain an impartial attitude, it would associate it with anti-German policy, precipitating a German-Hungarian aggression against itself. Superfluous, since any German-Italian attack will henceforth lead to a general war in which the play of guarantees and existing alliances will force in the same camp all the powers opposed to the German-Italian aggressive policy”. İsmet İnönü warned Carol on that occasion that his tendency to avoid upsetting Germany at any cost could not protect Romania from Nazi aggression, but Carol replied that his strategy was to ensure that, in the event of the outbreak of hostilities, Romania entered war as late as possible, adding that he was worried about a scenario in which, deprived of the possibility of successes in the heavily armed and fortified west, Germany would throw itself with overwhelming forces on a belligerent Romania [55].

These late efforts did not bring any results. Even around the conclusion of the Polish-British Mutual Assistance Agreement in London of August 25, 1939, Halifax noted the fact that the Poles did not want to include Romania in the list of states listed as potential victims of German aggression and in support of which the signatories (i.e. the British and the Poles) were committing themselves to war against Germany under Articles 1 and 2 of the treaty [56], [57]. On August 18, during the Anglo-Polish negotiations for the signing of the future politico-military treaty, the Polish embassy admitted that, although there was no reason why the technical arrangements to which we referred could not be worked out „if necessary”, that had not been done since „the Polish government was concerned not to provoke Germany, not to lose its influence in Hungary and not to risk throwing Hungary into Germany's arms”. The Poles also asserted that the inclusion of Romania in the future Polish-British treaty would have created new unilateral obligations for Poland towards Romania, without Bucharest also assuming obligations towards Warsaw; the Poles also assured the British of the fact that the mention of Romania in the future Romanian-British treaty was not necessary since „it was self-evident that, if Romania had been attacked and had defended itself, Poland would have came to the rescue [but that] Poland did not want to insert any provision of this kind in a treaty to which Romania was not a party” [58].

The final text of the secret protocol of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance signed on August 25 in London between Britain and Poland, point 2.(a), specified that „with regard to Romania, the United Kingdom government refers to the guarantee given to this country, and the Polish government refers to the mutual commitments of the Romanian-Polish alliance which Poland has never considered incompatible with its traditional friendship for Hungary". We, therefore, see that it cannot be said that, through the final text of the Agreement, Poland assumed any concrete obligation towards Romania, since in it the Poles referred to the Polish-Romanian alliance, which, in the absence of a military convention, would not assume an *erga omnes* orientation, and remained directed exclusively against the USSR. At the same time, the Poles continued to insist on their friendly attitude towards Hungary even during those late days when the Allies and the Romanians were sure that it could be used as a base for a German attack against Romania.

In conclusion, regarding the problem of the reorientation of the Romanian-Polish alliance towards the West, we can say that, despite the persistent efforts made for this purpose by the Western Allies - to whom the initiative in this regard belonged (more precisely, to the British) - this objective it remained unrealized due to the fact that neither Poland nor Romania believed that such a step could be in their respective national interests. As such, both Warsaw and Bucharest showed great reluctance towards the possibility of aligning with the belatedly-adopted Anglo-French policy of containing Nazi expansion. However, it must be pointed out here that, in August 1939, against the background of military tensions on the Romanian-Hungarian border, Romania initiated discussions with a view to signing a military convention through which the Romanian-Polish alliance could have acquired a westward orientation. Therefore, the British project came, due to the force of the circumstances, quite close to realization, although here we should specify that, from the consulted sources, we could not determine how exactly the Romanians envisaged that military convention, and therefore, we cannot know, if such step would have corresponded to the expectations of the Western Allies, but most probably not, for we have also shown that, at exactly the same time, Carol did not want that convention to be applicable against Germany. In any case, the Poles also refused to take that step and, for this reason, that late proposal made by Romania did not have any results and, in fact, we were not able, from the analyzed sources, to learn anything specific about it.

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1. *Florescu to RMFA, no. 643 of March 31, 1939*, *Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al României, (AMAER)*, fund E.9 Second World War, v. 314, f. 153-154.
2. *Ibidem*, *Tilea to RMFA*, no. 667 of April 7, 1939, f. 178.
3. *Visit of the Polish Foreign Ministry. First Meeting, April 4,* in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, (DBFP)*, Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, pp. 1,2,8,9.
4. *Tătărescu to RMFA, no. 201 of April 6, 1939*, *AMAER*, fund E.9 Second World War, v. 314, f. 174.
5. *Illustrative in this sense is a remark by Beck, made in front of Chamberlain during his visit to London on April 4, when the former expressed the opinion that only the ,,recent actions [of Germany] were unjustifiable", while, ,,until in 1938, German policy, although it put other countries in difficult situations, could be justified"; Chamberlain declared himself totally in agreement with this point of view: Visit of the Polish Foreign Minister.* Second Meeting, April 4, in *DBFP*, Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, p. 9.
6. *Ibidem*, p. 14-15.
7. *Ibidem*, p. 15-16.
8. *Léon Noël (French Ambassador to Poland) to Georges Bonnet, T. n° 514 of 29 March 1939*, vol. 15, in *Documents diplomatiques français (DDF)*, 2e série, 1936-1939, Paris, 1981, p. 267.
9. *Minutes of the meeting of the British government of April 5, 1939*. Cabinet 18(39), Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC), Microfilme Anglia fund, r. 6.
10. *Eden to Halifax, 5 April 1939*, in *DBFP*, Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, pp. 36-38.
11. *Ibidem, Visit of the Polish Foreign Minister, April 4-6, 1939 Record of Conversations.* Fourth Meeting, p. 49.
12. *Ibidem*.
13. *Ibidem*, *Halifax to Knatchbull-Hugessen, no. 76 of April 7, 1939*, p. 57-58.

14. *George Bonnet to Léon Noël, T. nos 312, 313 of 10 April 1939*, in *DDF*, 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 15, Paris, 1981, p. 528.
15. *Ibidem, Bonnet to Thierry, T. n° 228 of April 10, 1939*, p. 531
16. *Kennard to Halifax, no. 107 of 14 April 1939, in DBFP, Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952,* p. 198; Anna J. Pazmowska, Britain, Poland and the Eastern Front, Cambridge, 1987, p. 63.
17. *Franassovici to RMFA, no. 1511 of April 15, 1940, AMAER*, fund 71/Special files, v. 347, f. 196.
18. *Note du Directeur politique adjoint, Avril 13, 1939*, in *DDF,* 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 15, Paris, 1981, p. 603.
19. *Ibidem, Léon Noël to Bonnet, T. nos 606 à 608 in April 15, 1939*, p. 657.
20. *Kennard to Halifax, no. 108 of 14 April 1939,* in *DBFP,* Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, pp. 200-201.
21. *Ibidem, Thierry to Bonnet, T. nos 431 à 435 of 14 April 1939*, pp. 624-625
22. *Léon Noël to Bonnet, T. nos 576 à 580 of 12 April 1939,* in *DDF*, 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 15, Paris, 1981, pp. 574-575
23. *Ibidem, Léon Noël to Bonnet, T. nos 606 à 608 of 15 April 1939*, p. 657
24. *Franassovici to RMFA, no. 1499 of April 14, 1939, AMAER,* fund 71/Special files, v. 347, f. 132-133.
25. *Ibidem, Note of Cretzianu's conversation with Spitzmuller, dated April 14 from RMFA*, f. 13.
26. *Kennard to Halifax., no. 116 of 18 April 1939,* in *DBFP,* Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, p. 231.
27. *Ibidem, Phipps to Sargent, April 20, 1939*, pp. 261-261.
28. *Kennard to Cadogan of 2 May 1939,* in *DBFP,* Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, pp. 397-398.
29. *Regarding that trip, the fact that Gafencu had first moved to Berlin and only after that to the capitals of the Western powers had been interpreted by the Germans as additional proof of the ascendancy they were gaining, in Romania, in relation to the English and the French*: Доклад главы германской экономичный миссии в Румания Х. Волтата ополномоченному по четырелетнему план Германии Г. Geringu February 27, 1939, in Год кризиса. 1938-1939: Doc. and materials in 2 t. T. 1. 29 September 1938 - 31 May 1939 / М-во иностр. del USSR. — M.: Politizdat, 1990, doc. 162.
30. *Ibidem, Kennard to Halifax., no. 118 of April 18, 1939*, p. 233.
31. *Franassovici to RMFA, no. 1513 of April 17, 1939, AMAER,* fund 71/Special files, v. 347, 242.
32. *Léon Noël to Bonnet, T. nos 624, 625 of 18 April 1939,* in *DDF,* 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 15, Paris, 1981, p. 699.
33. *Note on Cretzianu's conversation with Thierry on April 20, 1939, AMAER,* fond 71/Special files, v. 347, f. 334.
34. *Thus, according to the Polish ambassador in London, Raczynski, ,,further technical arrangements would be negotiated at the appropriate time" without any additional details: Visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister, April 23-26, 1939*. Third Meeting, on April 25, in *DBFP*, Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, p. 324.
35. *Ibidem, Visit of the Romanian Foreign Minister, April 23-26, 1939.* First Meeting, on April 24, p. 298-299. *Gafencu to RMFA, fn of April 25, 1939*, in *AMAE*, Fond 71/Anglia, v. 10, f. 235-240
36. *Minues of the meeting of the British government on April 26, 1939*, ANIC, Mcf. Anglia, r. 6.
37. *Corbin to Bonnet, T. nos 1328 à 1331 of 25 April 1939,* in *DDF,* 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 15, Paris, 1981, p. 793 (see also footnote).
38. *Compte rendu d'une conversation entre M. Georges Bonnet et M. Gafencu, April 27, 1939,* in *DDF*, 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 15, Paris, 1981, p. 840.
39. *Romania's security within international commitments, August 25, 1939 AMAER*, Fund 71/Romania, vol. 7, f. 144-145.
40. *Ibidem, Thierry to Bonnet, T. nos 494 à 496 of April 27, 1939*, pp. 825-826.
41. *Léon Noël to Bonnet, T. nos 703, 704, 2 May 1939,* in *DDF*, 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 16, Paris, 1983, p. 4 (see the footnote); Ibidem, Bonnet to Léon Noël, T. nos 404 à 407, 4 May 1939, p. 108-109.
42. *Ibidem, Léon Noël to Bonnet, T. n° 765, 11 May 1939,* p. 298.
43. *Ibidem, Communication du Département à l'ambassade de Grande-Bretagne à Paris, mai 3, 1939, p. 50; Idem, Compte rendu de la liaison hebdomadaire aux Affaires étrangères du 3 mai 1939*, p. 61; *Ibidem, Bonnet to the diplomatic missions of France in Bucharest, Belgrade, Moscow, Berlin and Warsaw, May 5, 1939*, pp. 143-144.
44. *Ibidem, Léon Noël to Bonnet, T. n° 711 of May 7, 1939,* p. 116-117.

45. *Ibidem, Thierry to Bonnet, T. n° 538 of May 6, 1939*, p. 202.
46. *Gafencu's instructions to Cretzianu in view of the talks to be held with Halifax and Bonnet during the May session of the Council, ANIC, fond Grigore Gafencu,* i. 2106, v. 14, f. 4-5.
47. *Extract from record of conversation between the Secretary of State and M. Cretzianu at Geneva on 23 May 1939,* in *DBFP*, Third Series, v. 5, London, 1952, p. 658.
48. *Thierry to Bonnet, D. n° 382 of 19 June 1939,* in *DDF,* 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 16, Paris, 1983, p. 899
49. *Spitzmuller to Bonnet, T. nos 731 à 734 of 10 August 1939,* in DDF, 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 17, Paris, 1984, p. 792; *Ibidem, M. Meyer, deuxième secrétaire interprète à l'Ambassade de France à Ankara, à M. RMFAsigli, ambassadeur de France à Ankara, août 10, 1939*, p. 794; I*bidem, RMFAsigli to Bonnet, T. nos 1249 à 1252 of August 10, 1939*, p.795.
50. Halifax to Le Rougetel (British Chargé d'affaires in Bucharest), no. 399 of 3 August 1939, DBFP, Third series, vol. VI, 1939, London, 1953, pp. 582-585.
51. *Appendix V. Instructions to the British Military Mission to Moscow. Staff conversations with Russia. Memorandum for the guidance of the UK Delegation,* in *DBFP*, third series, vol. VI, 1939, London, 1953, p. 772.
52. *Instructions to the British Military Mission to Moscow August 1939. Staff Conversations With Russia. Memorandum for the Guidance of the United Kingdom Delegation [C10801/3356/18],* in *DBFP.* Third Series, v. 6, London, 1953, p. 772.
53. *RMFA sigli to Bonnet, T. nos 1269 à 1274 of 12 August 1939,* in *DDF*, 2e série, 1936-1939, vol. 17, Paris, 1984, pp. 880-881.
54. *Ibidem, Spitzmuller to Bonnet, D. n° 521 of August 12, 1939*, p. 884
55. *Notes on the meeting of His Majesty King Carol II with HE the President of the Turkish Republic, İsmet İnönü, August 14, 1939*, ANIC, V. Stoica fund, v. I/70, f. 68-69.
56. *Halifax to the Polish Ambassador in London, (c1141/27/55) of 14 August 1939,* in *DBFP*, Third Series, vol. VI, 1939, London, 1953, pp. 699-700.
57. *The documents of the French Embassy in London also confirm that, in the context of the negotiations to finalize the Polish-British Mutual Assistance Treaty, the Poles refused to include Romania in the list of states with military support whose Allies were to intervene, in the event of an indirect aggression; in the middle was probably the same objective of Polish foreign policy to maintain a neutral course in the event of a Romanian-Hungarian conflict*: Cambon to Bonnet, T. nos 2665, 2666 of 22 August 1939, in *DDF*, 2nd series, 1936-1939, vol. 18, Paris, 1985, p. 286.
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