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Why is Romania so Big? The Paris Peace Settlement and the Making of Greater Romania

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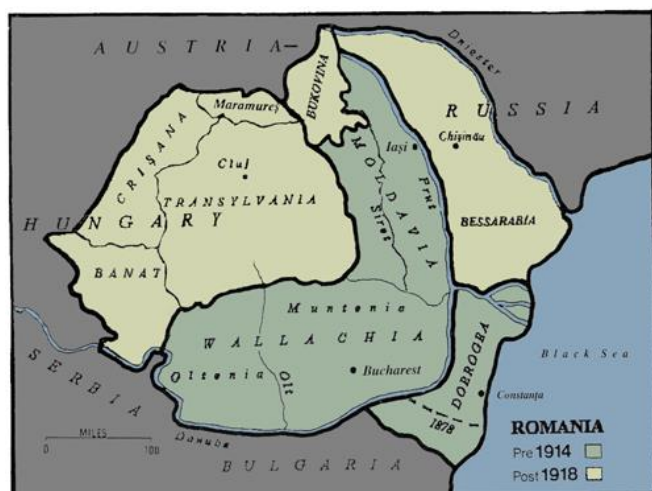
Why is Romania So Big? The Paris Peace Settlement and the Making of Greater Romania

Roy Sloan

Apart from Serbia, Romania gained more territory in Europe than any other state in the settlement at the end of the First World War. The country's land area more than doubled, going from 53,454 square miles in 1914 to 113,221 in 1921, and the population grew from 7.7 million to 16.1 million. The French geographer, Emmanuel de Martonne, celebrated the difference between pre-war Romania, which was "like a set-square" (Moldavia and Wallachia constituting the vertical and horizontal parts, respectively) and the "round and perfect" state created in 1920.¹ How did this small country, with a poor and even discreditable record in the war, emerge as one of the big winners of the Paris peace settlement? The main reason is quite simple. There were so many Romanians outside the boundaries of the pre-war state that expansion, given the concept of national self-determination, was inevitable. But there were other reasons as well, and there were some that have to be dismissed as surprisingly *unimportant*.

¹ Gilles Palsky, 'Emmanuel de Martonne and the Ethnographical Cartography of Central Europe (1917-1920)', *Imago Mundi* (January 2002), Vol. 54, 113, 115.

The broken treaty



Most of Romania's gains – Transylvania, the Banat and Bukovina – had been promised to her in the Treaty of Bucharest of August 1916, the treaty by which Britain, France, Italy and Russia induced Romania to join the war on the side of the Allies.² If Britain and France, by and large, honoured the previous year's Treaty of London with Italy, this was far from true of the Treaty of Bucharest and the expansion of Romania. The Romanian army had been unprepared for war, and

Romania's allies failed to keep the promises made in the treaty: beleaguered Russia was incapable of helping Romania to hold off the Bulgarians, and the offensive on the Macedonian Front that Britain and France promised for 1916 did not materialise until September 1918. The Romanians were defeated by the Germans, Austro-Hungarians and Bulgarians in 1916 and, despite a better showing in the summer of 1917, Romania was forced out of the war; she signed an armistice on 9 December 1917 and a peace treaty, the Peace of Bucharest, on 7 May 1918. The country's premature withdrawal from the war broke Article 5 of the treaty of 1916 and, in the eyes of the Allies, this was not repaired by Romania's rejoining the war on 9 November 1918.³

The Allies felt free to abandon their pledges. In the first British paper on the Balkans in December 1918, Allen Leeper and Harold Nicolson stated that the British Government had decided that the treaty "is no longer binding" and claimed that only "people of wholly officialised mentality" clung to it.⁴ In a private interview near the end of the month, the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, told the Romanian Minister to Paris "that it would not be possible to recognise Roumania as an Ally. That that country had been begged not to make peace but yet had persisted in doing so and under these circumstances had no right to be considered an Ally."⁵ It was highly convenient for the British and French to take this view. It saved them from embarrassing difficulties in relation to the Americans, who had no obligation to honour the treaty

² All three territories are shown on the map, which is adapted from William Rodney and Joe Boyle, *King of the Klondike* (Toronto, 1974).

³ Equally, the Allies had no time for the technical argument that the Peace of Bucharest of 1918 was invalid because it had never been signed by King Ferdinand and promulgated, as required by the Romanian constitution.

⁴ Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/4355, 19, 24, 26, South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans, December 1918.

⁵ *Ibid.*, FO 371/3141, 606, Derby to Balfour, 28 December 1918.

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and were opposed to all such land-grabbing secret deals. Declaring the treaty invalid also meant that they avoided having to disappoint their Serbian allies, whose war exploits far surpassed those of the Romanians and who wanted to take part of a territory, the Banat, which the treaty gave to Romania. Months later, Lord Hardinge implied that one should not be expected to honour commitments made under duress, in wartime, writing that Romania's Prime Minister had "imposed terms upon the Allies which even then were recognised as practically unrealisable".⁶

The Romanians became increasingly disturbed that they had not received "precise assurances" regarding "the engagements" made in the treaty.⁷ On hearing of Clemenceau's words, a furious Brătianu, the Prime Minister, called in the Allies' representatives in Bucharest to express "the violent emotion which he felt" and to complain that "Romania is treated like a poor wretch deserving pity and not like an Ally who has a right to justice." He regretted that the representatives "had not been permitted to declare that the treaty of 1916 remains in full force."⁸ In fact, despite Clemenceau's sally, the French Government, in view of Romania's re-entry into the war ("sa participation renouvelée"), decided that she *could* be regarded as an ally and admitted to the Conference on the same basis as "les autres petites Puissances". The treaty of 1916, though legally abrogated ("en droit abrogé") by the Peace of Bucharest, would be the *basis* ("prenant pour base") of the Conference's examination of Romanian claims.⁹ On 12 January 1919, in the first meeting of the Council of Ten, the supreme body of the Peace Conference, Foreign Secretary Balfour accepted that Romania merited a place at the Conference but he "did not wish thereby to renew every clause of the treaty which Roumania had broken by going out of the War."¹⁰ In private comments, Nicolson and Leeper repudiated the treaty and attributed Brătianu's insistence on it to domestic politicking: he sought popularity "by identifying himself with the maximum imperialist programme as embodied in the 1916 Treaty" (Nicolson). Of course, if Greater Romania were created according to the treaty, Brătianu's own creation, he stood to win all the plaudits in Romanian eyes.

⁶ Ibid., FO 371/3569, 241, note by Hardinge, November 1919.

⁷ Ibid., FO 371/3141, 588, Derby to Foreign Office, 26 December 1918. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference 1919 (FRUS), II, 402, Vopicka to Polk, 27 December 1918, enclosing copy of a telegram from the Allied representatives in Bucharest.

⁸ British Delegation, correspondence and papers relating to South and South-East Europe, 1919, FO 608/48, 162, Derby to Curzon, 10 January 1919 (also in Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3568, 226). FRUS, I, 265, Bliss to Polk, 11 January 1919.

⁹ Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3568, 187, Derby to Balfour, 31 December 1919; *ibid.*, 192, Foreign Office to Derby, 3 January 1919.

¹⁰ FRUS, III, 486, The Council of Ten: Minutes of Meetings, 12 January 1919.

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In Paris, Brătianu appeared before the Council of Ten on 31 January and 1 February 1919. He opened on 31 January by pointing to the 1916 treaty and expressing “complete confidence” that the three signatories present (Britain, France and Italy) would honour it – an approach likely to raise the hackles of Lloyd George and Clemenceau and to alienate an American president, Woodrow Wilson, who had denounced secret treaties. Allen Leeper observed that “Brătianu did not speak much about the binding character of the treaty” but used it instead as “evidence of a recognition of the justice of R[omania]’s claims on the part of the Western Powers” – a distinction that others might not have noticed.¹¹ On 1 February, Brătianu returned to the theme of the treaty obligations and added that Romania’s “worst disappointments” had “not always come from the side of the enemy,” given “the possibility accorded to Germany by quiet on the other fronts of concentrating her efforts against Roumania” and “the inactivity of the neighbouring Allies”. Accusing his allies of shirking their duty was not the most diplomatic way to win over a sceptical audience. Romania, he said, had “continued the fight” until Russia’s collapse forced her to sign a temporary peace, “a lull in a conflict which was to be resumed”.¹² This tale of “loyal devotion” to the Allies did not sit well with those who felt that Romania had deserted the cause, rejoining the fray at the last minute. At dinner with the Americans, Brătianu expounded his “thesis” that “Rumania has done everything to fulfill her obligations” under “the secret treaty of 1916 (while the Allies failed in many of theirs); that Rumania was sold out, but even so fought until the Allies advised her to make an armistice with the Germans; and that the King never signed the treaty ...”¹³

Britain and France refrained from making any statement on the validity of the treaty, a line they adhered to through all the following proceedings. Romania’s claims were referred to a committee of experts, the Commission on Romanian Affairs, where they were assessed on their merits, with only the Italians (who had their own reason for stressing the sanctity of wartime treaties) referring to pledges made in the Treaty of Bucharest. The treaty was effectively forgotten. As we know, Romania gained a great deal, but she had to share the Banat with Serbia, the latter getting the Serb-majority part (Torontal). This departure from the treaty – the whole Banat had been promised to Romania – was the greatest territorial grievance of the Romanians. In mid-March, when Lord Curzon pointed out to Brătianu that his country was to be “considerably aggrandised”, “even this did not satisfy him. He would have nothing short of the frontiers of

¹¹ The Papers of Alexander Wigram Allen Leeper (LEEP), 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 31 January 1919.

¹² FRUS, III, 841-45, The Council of Ten: Minutes of Meetings, 1 February 1919.

¹³ Charles Seymour, *Letters from the Paris Peace Conference by Charles Seymour* (New Haven and London, 1965), 144-45, Seymour to Mr and Mrs Thomas Watkins, 2 February 1919.

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1916.”¹⁴

Flawed champion

One of the main streets in Bucharest is the boulevard named after Ionel Brătianu, the Prime Minister who presented Romania’s case in Paris and the man credited with the winning of Greater Romania. This acclaim is wholly undeserved. His insistence on Romania’s rights under the treaty of 1916 was part of the problem, but there was also something about the self-righteous and inflexible personality of Brătianu that alienated his Western allies. An early indication that he would not be well received came when,



Ivan Mestrovic’s statue of Brătianu

passing through Serbia on his way to Paris, Brătianu approached Britain’s Admiral Troubridge (commanding on the Danube) and was insistent – “He in fact made a Speech at me” – on Romania getting the whole Banat. Of the counter-argument that giving Romania the Banat would put Belgrade, just over the Danube, “under the menace of Roumanian guns” he said that the Serbians “could and should shift the Capital”. The British were unimpressed. For Troubridge, Brătianu was “cunning rather than clever” and seemed to have “no arguments at all”. Charles des Graz, the diplomat who forwarded Troubridge’s note, remarked that “Bratiano’s language and arguments drive me personally to the conclusion that his place is apparently several rungs lower on the ladder of statesmanship than I had imagined.”¹⁵

In Paris, Harold Nicolson took an extremely dim view of Romania’s leader:

*Bratianu is a bearded woman, a forceful humbug, a Bucharest intellectual, a most unpleasing man. Handsome and exuberant, he flings his fine head sideways, catching his own profile in the glass. He makes elaborate verbal jokes, imagining them to be Parisian.*¹⁶

¹⁴ Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3568, 401, Curzon to Derby, 19 March 1919.

¹⁵ British Delegation, correspondence and papers relating to South and South-East Europe, 1919, FO 608/48, 360, des Graz to Hardinge, 14 January 1919.

¹⁶ Harold Nicolson, *Peacekeeping 1919* (London, 1933), 248, Diary, 25 January 1919. America’s Douglas Johnson recalled “the black-bearded Bratiano of Rumania, rather moody, fighting for the treaty of 1916, resentful of opposition ... the scalding invective of Bratiano.” Johnson in E.M. House and C. Seymour, eds., *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919 by American Delegates* (London, 1921), 94.

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“The thought of Rumania,” he wrote later, “and especially of Bratianu, aspiring to the status of a Great Power was an agony to the soul.” He deprecated “the vanities and the obstinate blindness of M. Bratianu,” who “so mishandled the Rumanian case at the Conference that he estranged the most ardent friends of Rumania.”¹⁷ Romania’s English Queen Marie called Brătianu “a good man” of “much ability”, but also “a tiresome, sticky and tedious individual”.¹⁸ When Brătianu appeared before the Council of Ten, Nicolson was



far from impressed:

Pichon fetches Bratianu, Misu, Pasic and Trumbic. What a gang!

*... Bratianu, with histrionic detachment, opens his case. He is evidently convinced that he is a greater statesman than any present. A smile of irony and self-consciousness recurs from time to time. He flings his fine head in profile. He makes a dreadful impression.*¹⁹

On 1 February, in his second appearance, Brătianu began with what might have been intended as a joke: “He says this is the second time that he has had to face a viva examination in Paris. The first time was when he took his degree in law. “On that occasion my examiners knew more than I did.”” This was an unwise reference to his audience’s ignorance. “Silly ass,” Nicolson commented. “He is on this occasion very verbose and unconvincing and Balkan.”²⁰ Leeper “met Brătianu yesterday for the first time & was not very favourably impressed. He’s quite a fish out of water here, I think, & the way he stated his case was absolutely suranné [outmoded], though cleverly done after a fashion. Last night I went to a big (70 people) Anglo-Roumanian dinner at Laurent’s. Také [Ionescu] made a perfectly wonderful speech – he is eloquent.”²¹ Ionescu was the Westernised and compliant Romanian with whom the Allies would have preferred to do business. He was willing to allow Serbia to take the western Banat. Brătianu was later scornful – “No doubt the Takist foreign policy was

¹⁷ Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 135-36.

¹⁸ Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton, 1989), Volume 57, 192, Diary of Dr Grayson, 10 April 1919 (on Marie’s words to Wilson).

¹⁹ Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 253-4, Diary, 31 January 1919.

²⁰ Ibid., 254, Diary, 1 February 1919. In fact, Brătianu took an engineering degree.

²¹ Papers of Allen Leeper (LEEP), 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 2 February 1919. For another critical view of Brătianu, see R.G.D. Laffan in Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, IV, 224-26: “His case was stated with skill, but it is alleged that there was a certain languor of manner which appears to have convinced the Ten that in fact it was not the arguments he used, but the Treaty of 1916 on which he considered his case really rested.”

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more acceptable to the Allies than his own”²² – but Brătianu’s approach did not yield a better outcome: Serbia acquired the disputed territory.

When he appeared before the committee set up to examine Romania’s claims, on 22 February, Brătianu did not make a positive impression on Sir Eyre Crowe:

*... [H]e plays his game very unskilfully here. Neither his manner nor the tone of his vehement representations are impressing the conference or the Roumanian committee in favour of the Roumanian claim, which everyone is agreed could be enforced only at the price of a war with Serbia.*²³

Although he was heard by both the Council and the Commission, Brătianu’s role in Paris was peripheral and he certainly took no part in the decision-making. On 29 May, finally unleashed, he led the “revolt of the small powers” in the secret plenary session called to approve the treaty with Austria. His conduct did not improve his standing among the Allied leaders. He demanded the right to examine the text of the treaty before voting for its adoption. “Clemenceau at once lost his temper, spoke with great rapidity so that it was difficult to hear what he said, was very rude to Bratiano ...”²⁴ On 31 May, Brătianu complained that he had still not been given enough time: “Clemenceau at once rudely interrupted him denying his facts and saying he was insulting the Peace Conference.”²⁵ Brătianu then launched an attack on the requirement (in a clause in the Austrian treaty and in a projected Minorities Treaty) that Romania should guarantee the rights of minorities. He contended not only that Romanian sovereignty would be infringed by “foreign intervention” but also that granting minorities rights could be divisive, undermining “the brotherhood of the various races ... History is there to prove that the protection of minorities ... has done more to disintegrate States than to consolidate them.”²⁶ “Clemenceau interposed furiously ... Poor old man, the pain in his body affects his temper at times.”²⁷ Nicolson’s account shows Clemenceau giving full vent to his fury:

Bratianu, dandified and querulous, raised objections to the Minorities clauses and contended that the Great Powers should not be accorded the right of interference in the internal affairs of Rumania. Clemenceau,

²² Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3569, 247, Rattigan to Curzon, 2 November 1919 (also in E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (London, 1956), First Series (DBFP), Vol. VI, 322).

²³ British Delegation, correspondence and papers relating to South and South-East Europe, 1919, FO 608/49, 210, note by Crowe, 23 February 1919. Seymour thought Brătianu “rather testy and morose”. *Letters from Charles Seymour*, 173, Seymour to Mr and Mrs Thomas Watkins, 24 February 1919.

²⁴ Papers of Sir James and Agnes Headlam-Morley, Account 727/1, Political Diary, 1 June 1919.

²⁵ T. G. Otte, ed., *An Historian in Peace and War: The Diaries of Harold Temperley* (Farnham and Burlington, 2014), 427, 1 June 1919.

²⁶ FRUS, III, 395-97, Plenary Session of the Peace Conference, 31 May 1919.

²⁷ Otte, *Diaries of Harold Temperley*, 427, 1 June 1919.

who has been fingering an ivory paper cutter in his lavender gloves, flings it down petulantly. 'Voyons!' he shouts. 'Est-ce ici une conference ou non? Admettez-vous l'autorité ici, ou non? Il y a des puissances dont l'histoire nous impose des garanties!' This reference to the Rumanian treatment of the Jews causes Bratianu to flush to the roots of his hair. For a moment I expect him to burst into flames. He recovers himself, pouts, shrugs his shoulders, resumes his seat. On sitting down he continues to shrug his shoulders like a vain and self-conscious schoolboy.²⁸

According to Leeper, "Brătianu, Trumbic [for Yugoslavia] & the rest made a great fuss ... Clemenceau was in rather a bad temper & there were passages of arms between him & Brătianu & Trumbic who were both rather tiresome ... Wilson made a long & I thought very good reply."²⁹ Wilson explained that the Great Powers could not be expected to guarantee a settlement which did not protect minorities created by the Peace Conference. "If they were to guarantee the settlement they must see to it that it was a just one and that causes of conflict and disorder were not left."³⁰ "He appeals to the smaller Powers to accept the authority of their elder brothers who won the war. It is admirably done, admirably conceived. Calm is restored to the troubled waters."³¹ But Brătianu repudiated the injustice, the inequality of a measure that was not required of *all* states; none of the Big Four would have this imposed on them, and neither would Germany.³² "[W]hile he was speaking, Lloyd George turned round and in a very loud voice said: 'This damned fellow; he cannot even get coats for his soldiers without us,' an observation which, though it presents a substantial truth, might perhaps have been expressed more discreetly."³³ It is interesting to note the scorn poured on Brătianu here when, on the question of principle, he was surely *right*: Romania's national sovereignty was threatened by a measure which would have authorised the Powers to interfere in the country's domestic affairs. Queen Marie, irked when Wilson "very sanctimoniously preached to me about how we should treat our minorities," reminded him of "the Negro and Japanese questions in the United States," and one of the Romanian delegates, future Prime Minister Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, called Wilson "the most hypocritical political impostor" after his speech to the Council.³⁴

²⁸ Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 354, 31 May 1919.

²⁹ Papers of Allen Leeper (LEEP), 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 1 June 1919; *ibid.*, 3/9, Allen Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 7 June 1919.

³⁰ Papers of Sir James and Agnes Headlam-Morley, Account 727/1, Political Diary, 1 June 1919.

³¹ Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 355, 31 May 1919. Temperley also praised Wilson's "long and rather fine speech". Otte, *Diaries of Harold Temperley*, 428, 1 June 1919.

³² FRUS, III, 406-9, Plenary Session of the Peace Conference, 31 May 1919.

³³ Papers of Sir James and Agnes Headlam-Morley, Account 727/1, Political Diary, 1 June 1919.

³⁴ Queen Marie of Roumania, 'My Mission, III: Paris Again,' *The Cornhill Magazine* (December 1939), Vol. 160, No. 960, 731-32. Marcel Mitrasca, *Moldova: A Romanian Province Under Russian Rule* (New York, 2002), 355-56. A Haberdashers' Aske's Occasional Paper. All rights reserved.

Brătianu did not take part in the presentation of the draft treaty to the Austrians on 2 June. When it was rumoured that he planned to resign in protest against the Austrian treaty, Lloyd George was “not too upset ... I would like to see Take Ionescu here, or another man who takes the western point of view.”³⁵ The frontier between Romania and Hungary was formally revealed to Brătianu by the Council of Foreign Ministers on 11 June. Harold Temperley’s report gives a clear picture of frayed tempers:

*Meeting of the 5 today which I attended. We were instructed by the Four to communicate the terms of the treaties to Czechoslovakia and Roumania. Bratianu astonished even the hardiest of us by saying that the boundaries had only been communicated to him at 10 a.m. that day. Crowe, by no means sotto voce, ejaculated behind Balfour’s chair ‘What a lie.’ Lansing asked him point blank. Have you not had unofficial knowledge of the decisions, and seen the maps? Bratianu Very conflicting reports. Lansing What kind of conflicting reports? Bratianu All kinds ... We all gasped at this hardy imitator of Italy.*³⁶

“B. bleated a lot” about “the new Rumanian frontiers,” wrote Leeper, “& is inclined at present to say he won’t sign” the Austrian treaty. Charles Seymour found Brătianu “very sulky and belligerent in his dissatisfaction with the proposed frontier” and contrasted this with Czechoslovakia’s Edvard Beneš’s “very smiling” demeanour and offer to “do everything to help things along. The result was that in today’s meeting of the Five, the small additions that Beneš asked for were granted; while in answer to Brătianu’s complaint the Five recommended that the suggested frontier be maintained.” This encapsulates in microcosm the story of Brătianu’s performance in Paris; his outspokenness alienated the Powers, when a complaisant attitude might have been more productive. On 12 June, the Foreign Ministers did indeed resolve that the boundaries decided upon “should be adhered to without alteration”, regardless of Romania’s view.³⁷ Brătianu’s opposition had yielded nothing.

On 2 July, Brătianu appeared before the Council of the Heads of Delegations – which replaced the Council of Four (and the Council of Five) after the departure from Paris of Wilson, Lloyd George and Italy’s Sonnino – to press for the cession of Bessarabia. Lansing pressed hard for a plebiscite, making Brătianu “dusky red, <voluble> and a little heated,” thought Temperley. At the end, “Bratianu shook hands all round

³⁵ Paul Mantoux, *The Deliberations of the Council of Four* (Princeton, 1992), II, 333, 6 June 1919.

³⁶ Otte, *Diaries of Harold Temperley*, 434, 11 June 1919. “Of course they [Brătianu and the Czech leaders] knew unofficially but they had never been officially informed.” *Letters from Charles Seymour*, 268, Seymour to Mr and Mrs Thomas Watkins, 12 June 1919.

³⁷ Papers of Allen Leeper (LEEP), 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 11 June 1919. *Letters from Charles Seymour*, 268, Seymour to Mr and Mrs Thomas Watkins, 12 June 1919. FRUS, VI, 823-24, The Council of Foreign Ministers: Minutes of Meetings, 12 June 1919. “... the Five refused to alter the Roumanian frontiers as requested by Bratianu ...” Otte, *Diaries of Harold Temperley*, 435, 12 June 1919.

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– whether to repair his damaged reputation or because he was retiring permanently I don't know.”³⁸

Meeting Frank Rattigan (the British envoy) after his return to Bucharest, Brătianu “poured out the story of his wrongs with considerable feeling,” expressing “his great dissatisfaction with the treatment of Roumania at the Peace Conference,” where he had expected “the sympathetic treatment due to an ally who had nobly done her duty and undergone very heavy sacrifices,” but, instead, the Great Powers “decided the fate of the small Powers” without adequate consultation and, indeed, “he found himself treated practically as an enemy.”³⁹ Some weeks later, with the Treaty of St Germain in the final stages of preparation, the Commission on Romanian (and Yugoslav) Affairs belatedly proposed that Romania should be given Bukovina “in its entirety”: the two small parts that were originally intended for a Ruthenian state should go to Romania after all. This change was caused, in part, by the decision that Eastern Galicia was not after all to be a Ruthenian state; it was allocated instead to Poland, which was “disposed to concede” the areas in question to Romania. Balfour cited Brătianu's leadership as a reason to *oppose* the concession. According to Temperley's diary,

... Then came up the question of the old boundary of the Bukovina, less the junction. Balf[ou]r suddenly woke up – R[omani]a insists on disobeying us[;] why sh[ou]ld we oblige her. She has not been very nice or very wise.

Move to postpone.

Clemenceau (with a sure win) [‘]Mr Balfour moves to postpone till R[omani]a has a reasonable gov[ernmen]t’.

<Balfour: ‘A reasonable gov[ernmen]t as unlike as [sic] Mr B[rătianu]’s as possible’.

Clem[enceau]: ‘Do you think there is a chance to obtain [it]?>

*Balfour: ‘till the Greek Calends’.*⁴⁰

The Council granted Bukovina to Romania “on the condition that Roumania should show goodwill towards the Allies”.⁴¹ It was a weak expression (and it did not feature in the Treaty of St Germain, which gave Bukovina to Romania), but the dissatisfaction with Brătianu and Romania was manifest. Frank Rattigan met

³⁸ Otte, *Diaries of Harold Temperley*, 444-5, 3 July 1919.

³⁹ British Delegation, correspondence and papers relating to South and South-East Europe, 1919, FO 608/49, 284, Rattigan to Curzon, 12 July 1919 (also in DBFP, First Series, Vol. VI, 74).

⁴⁰ Otte, *Diaries of Harold Temperley*, 449-50, 1 August 1919. The calends featured in the Roman calendar but not the Greek calendar, so “till the Greek Calends” means something that will never happen.

⁴¹ Notes of Meetings of the Heads of Delegations of the Five Great Powers, National Archives, CAB 29/70, 150-2, 185-7, 1 August 1919 (also in FRUS, VII, 455-7, 474-5).

Brătianu again on 11 August and their encounter brought out the two, conflicting ideas of what had happened in Paris:

I have the honour to report that M. Bratiano asked me yesterday what was the reason for the extraordinary hostility shown towards Roumania by the Conference and by America in particular.

I replied that I could not admit that there was any special animus against Roumania, but said that the latter's attitude in regard to her claims had not been such as to win the sympathies of the Conference. She had shown some lack of pliancy in regard to her pretensions and had been apparently impervious to the idea that there must be a good deal of give and take in the settlement of the conflicting claims with which the Conference had had to deal. She had adopted an uncompromising attitude, and had refused to budge an inch from the position she had taken up ...

M. Bratiano then repeated his complaint that the Conference had apparently taken a personal dislike to him and hinted that they had allowed this to influence them in their treatment of Roumania. He spoke particularly of Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, and M. Clemenceau. I said that I had no knowledge of this alleged antipathy on the part of these statesmen, but I thought that his Excellency [Brătianu] did not quite realise to what an extent a hard and fast attitude must have exasperated men who were overworked and distraught with the attempt to find a solution of the countless problems with which they had to deal.⁴²

Nicolson later boasted that the peacemakers were not influenced by their dislike of Brătianu: “their decisions were not in fact wholly governed by subjective emotions. The Bratianu incident is valuable as a proof of their objectivity. No man could have been more foolish, unreasonable, irritating or provocative than Ion Bratianu. And yet the almost universal antipathy which he inspired did not, in fact, prejudice the claims of his country at the Peace Conference. Rumania obtained ‘all and more than all’. And she obtained this on wholly impersonal grounds.”⁴³ It is not possible to point to a Romanian setback and say that it is attributable to the peacemakers’ dislike of her Prime Minister. However, Sherman Spector’s view that the achievement of Greater Romania “was, for the most part, the result of the skillful diplomacy of Bratianu” has not been borne out by the present author’s findings.⁴⁴ The settlement proposed by the territorial Commission and endorsed by the higher organs of the Conference owed nothing to his clumsy advocacy. Being judged obdurate and demanding by disdainful, public-school Englishmen is not always a bad thing – better a taker

⁴² Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3569, 78, Rattigan to Curzon, 12 August 1919.

⁴³ Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 137.

⁴⁴ Sherman David Spector, *Romania at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study of the Diplomacy of Ioan I. C. Bratianu* (Iasi, 1995), 276.

than a Takist – but diplomacy that alienated all of the Big Three, with their mix of backgrounds, personalities and agendas, as well as Romanophiles like Leeper and Rattigan, hardly merits the name of diplomacy at all.⁴⁵

The quiet Australian

Credit for Romania's success belongs elsewhere. André Tardieu, the French chairman of the Commission on Romanian Affairs (and of the Central Territorial Committee to which it reported), was a "solid Romanophile" who consistently supported the Romanian point of view.⁴⁶ Another friend of Romania, Emmanuel de Martonne, provided maps of Transylvania on which the Magyar and German towns appeared as mere specks of colour ("islets") in the sea of red that represented the Romanian-majority rural areas; such depictions complemented the French and Romanian argument (inspired by de Martonne) that the rooted and stable rural population merited more consideration than the shifting and "artificial" majorities in the towns.⁴⁷ The British official most closely concerned with Romanian affairs was Allen Leeper. Leeper (right), who had left Australia to study at Oxford (Balliol) before the war and was rejected on medical grounds when he tried to sign up in 1914, was seconded to the Foreign Office in 1915 from his job at the British Museum. He spoke Romanian and was the Honorary Secretary (and co-founder) of the Anglo-Romanian Society, and he had shown his partisanship as the author of *The Justice of Rumania's Cause* in 1917. His diary shows that he met constantly with Romanians after arriving in Paris, and Také Ionescu and Nicolae Mișu (deputy leader of the Romanian delegation) were his personal friends. "Také" was one of very few who got first-name billing in the diary; Mișu – "my old friend Mișu"⁴⁸ – was familiar to him as the Romanian ambassador to London. He told his brother of "a long & most satisfactory talk" with Mișu in which they "worked out together a formula for stating certain difficult controversial questions"⁴⁹ – a form of collusion that would disqualify modern civil servants from involvement. Leeper and Crowe represented Britain on the Commission and Leeper reported on 8 February that "Crowe accepted



⁴⁵ For another assessment, which gives Brătianu more credit ("Ion Brătianu, more than any other person, must be credited with the creation of Greater Romania") than he receives here but also faults his "tactless and uncompromising" diplomacy, which could be "counter-productive", see Glenn E. Torrey, *Romania and World War I* (Iași, 1999), 230.

⁴⁶ Spector, *Romania at the Paris Peace Conference*, 136.

⁴⁷ Palsky, Emmanuel de Martonne and the Ethnographical Cartography of Central Europe, *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 54, 115.

⁴⁸ Papers of Allen Leeper (LEEP), 3/9, Allen Leeper to Alexander Leeper (father), 26 January 1919.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 20 January 1919.

my detailed recommendations yesterday en bloc”.⁵⁰ He attended every meeting of the Commission and was Britain’s chief representative on the sub-committee established to finalise the new frontiers. He “managed to reach an agreement with the American delegates as to the frontiers still in question” and by 21 February he was “very hopeful” that they would “be able to establish a common measure between the American, French and British proposals”.⁵¹ Leeper was proud of what he and the other delegates achieved:

*[We] got through a great deal of work, practically finishing off the Yugoslav & entirely completing the Rumanian frontiers ... The British, French & American delegates are now in practically entire agreement though it meant a good deal of give & take. I carried some & lost others of my proposals. The Italians remain extremely difficult, almost impossible on certain subjects. I’m delighted with the French.*⁵²

This was written before the French defeated him on the frontier in the Banat: confident at one stage that he had prevailed (and achieved the solution that was “much the fairest to both Rumanians & Serbs”), he found in mid-March that this “had to be upset because the French were frightened by various attempts the Serbs made to blackmail them, and yesterday afternoon [12 March] in consequence we spent three hours drawing an alternative line which has now been adopted. I am not satisfied with it, but all the same we were bound to accept it.”⁵³ Further north, “In Transilvania I’m content except that I failed to get the Csáp-Nagy Károly [railway] line for Rumania.”⁵⁴

Leeper did not work in an intellectual vacuum. His advocacy of Romanian interests reflected his membership of the *New Europe* group led by Robert Seton-Watson. They were advocates of national self-determination (and dismantlement of the Habsburg Empire) and, although Seton-Watson had no official role in making the successor states, his ideas on “The Future Frontiers of Hungary” were endorsed and attached in the Leeper-Nicolson report of December 1918, and Nicolson recalled that Leeper and he “never moved a yard without previous consultation with experts of the authority of Dr. Seton-Watson who was in Paris at the time.”⁵⁵ However, Seton-Watson’s proposals for Hungary had included extensive “grey zones”, where the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 8 February 1919.

⁵¹ Ibid., 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 13, 21 February 1919.

⁵² Ibid., 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 2 March 1919.

⁵³ Ibid., 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 13 February, 13 March 1919.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 8 March 1919; *ibid.*, 1/2, 19, Leeper’s Personal Diary, 2 March 1919. He was defeated by America’s Charles Seymour, who was concerned that the proposal to give Romania the Csáp-Nagykároly line would transfer an almost exclusively Hungarian area. Ignác Romsics, *The Dismantling of Hungary: The Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920* (Boulder, 2002), 82.

⁵⁵ Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/4355, 27, 39-41, South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans, December 1918. Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 126. Nicolson also wrote that he was “overwhelmingly imbued” with the “doctrines” of *The New Europe*. *Ibid.*, 33.

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ethnic factor was inconclusive. It was in the territorial commissions (Czech and Romanian) that these lands were allocated, and Leeper clearly had a major role.

Leeper was even more important, and certainly more prominent, when key issues were finally settled in February and March 1920. Romania's acquisition of Bessarabia was delayed because the Allies were reluctant to reward a country which had invaded Hungary in August 1919 and stubbornly refused to withdraw to the Romania-Hungary frontier decided on in June. Leeper now led the way towards a settlement and he has been described as "the person who seems to have had the greatest influence over the formulation of the British policy on Bessarabia."⁵⁶ On 19 February, he urged the advisability of an early agreement to transfer Bessarabia to Romania: the new Prime Minister, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, and his government were "looking forward to close relations with the British Government and people ... If the opportunity is lost of strengthening this current now, which is stronger than it has ever been, the handle will be given to other elements in Roumania far less desirable."⁵⁷ Leeper drafted a statement acknowledging that the Romanians "have ordered the withdrawal of their troops from Hungary" and proposed "a treaty of recognition" of "the reunion" of Bessarabia with Romania. Curzon approved of Leeper's "most valuable" paper and "submit[ted] that his recommendations sh. be given effect to".⁵⁸ Practical difficulties (aggravated by snow) held up the Romanian withdrawal and in another memorandum, on 28 February, Leeper recommended awarding Bessarabia to Romania if her Prime Minister gave adequate *assurances* on the evacuation of Hungary. Curzon duly stated on 3 March that, with evacuation under way, he felt that "the Council might now agree to the incorporation of Bessarabia in Roumania."⁵⁹ Romania's union with Bessarabia was announced by the Council of Premiers (of France, Britain and Italy) on 9 March and specified in a separate treaty, which Romania signed on 28 October 1920.

The main business of the first few months of 1920 was the making of the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary. On 25 February and 3 March 1920, Lloyd George and Italy's Francesco Nitti advocated re-examination of a treaty that would see 2,750,000 Magyars "handed over like cattle" (Lloyd George) to foreign rule (or handed

⁵⁶ Mitrasca, *Moldova: A Romanian Province*, 171.

⁵⁷ Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3569, 398, Memorandum by Leeper, 19 February 1919. This was a clear reference to the deposed Brătianu.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 397, note by Curzon, n.d.; *ibid.*, 400, Leeper's Draft of Proposed Statement on Bessarabia.

⁵⁹ Memorandum on Bessarabia by Allen Leeper, 28 February 1920, in Mitrasca, *Moldova: A Romanian Province*, 171-2. DBFP, First Series, Vol. VII, 379-80, Meeting of Allied Conference of 3 March 1920.

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over “to people more ignorant and less advanced,” as Nitti put it in his memoirs).⁶⁰ On 8 March, Allen Leeper, billed as “the British expert”, weighed in with a lengthy memorandum declaring that if the Conference went back on their “publicly announced” decisions they would be seen in Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia “to have been guilty of a serious breach of faith,” and that these countries would consider themselves as “no longer bound” by either the minorities clauses of the various treaties or their agreement to evacuate Hungarian territory. Indeed, he warned, they would “be likely to go to the other extreme and again advance into Hungary”.⁶¹ The Foreign Ministers rejected Hungary’s demand for a plebiscite (the “oppressed populations” had already spoken), adhered to the Hungarian frontiers as settled in June 1919, and adopted Leeper’s suggestion that post-settlement mediation by the League could attend to any border disputes.⁶² The frontiers, including those between Romania and Hungary, were confirmed in the Treaty of Trianon of 4 June 1920.

Leeper’s interventions suggest that the man who did so much to devise the settlement in 1919 had become a driving force in securing its execution in 1920. In February 1919, as part of the Romanian Commission, he had felt “a midget to be in such an exalted position”.⁶³ Now he was working closely with Lloyd George and Curzon and even Clemenceau (“easily the most impressive man I’ve ever met personally”).⁶⁴ His contribution on 8 March, when he actually spoke about his Hungary memorandum before the Foreign Ministers, caused even this modest individual to boast of his success:

[I]t has all been intensely interesting as the Peace Conference, in addition to Turkey (in which question I am involved only in part), has been discussing Hungary, the Adriatic, Rumania & all my other subjects. I have been present at a great many of the meetings & seen a lot of all the people concerned in consequence. I’ve also felt particularly pleased over the way several of my proposals both in regard to the Hungarian treaty,

⁶⁰ Ibid., 248-9, 384-9, Meetings of Allied Conference, 25 February, 3 March 1920. Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary*, 128, quoting Francesco S. Nitti, *Peaceless Europe* (London, 1922), 164-65.

⁶¹ DBFP, First Series, Vol. VII, 441, Meeting of Conference of Ambassadors and Foreign Ministers, 8 March 1920, including Memorandum by the Foreign Office (Leeper) on the Hungarian Peace Treaty, 8 March 1920. This followed an internal Leeper memorandum of 11 February 1920 in which he countered the Hungarians’ ethnographic case and upheld Romania’s claims. Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3569, 409, Leeper’s Minute on Hohler’s Despatch, 11 February 1920.

⁶² DBFP, First Series, Vol. VII, 440-9, Meeting of Conference of Ambassadors and Foreign Ministers, 8 March 1920. The proposed post-settlement mediation by the League was specified in a covering letter and not in the treaty itself. Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary*, 137-8. Privately, Leeper used the prospect of “arbitration of the League of Nations” to fend off an appeal by Banat Romanians; Vaida-Voevod told him that he “did not wish himself to reopen the subject”. Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3566, 504, note by Leeper, 10 March 1920.

⁶³ Papers of Allen Leeper (LEEP), 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 15 February 1919.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 3/11, Allen Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 17, 25 January 1920.

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*Bessarabia, the Adriatic correspondence with Wilson, Montenegro & other things have been adopted by the Conference. On Monday, for practically the first time, Ld Curzon called on me to make a statement to the Conference, so I had a ten minutes talk which was fun.*⁶⁵

It is an interesting possibility that this obscure young Australian achieved more for Romania than its celebrated but irritating leader. It is impossible to detect any influence from Romania's other celebrity,



Queen Marie. The vivacious and beautiful Marie (a grandchild of Queen Victoria) arrived in Paris on 5 March and certainly caused a stir among the elderly statesmen in Paris.



Colonel House found her “one of the most delightful personalities of all the royal women I have met in the West,” and Lloyd

[Left: Ferdinand and Marie in Paris in 1919.](#)

[Right: a younger Marie.](#)

George, who possibly had an eye for such things, thought her “very naughty”.⁶⁶ She had less success with the prim Woodrow Wilson – “a born preacher,” she wrote, who “might be a highly cultivated clergyman” – annoying him so much with her lateness that, Edith Benham observed, with every passing moment one “could see from the cut of the P.’s jaw that a slice of the Dobrudja, or Roumania, was being lopped off.”⁶⁷ Bound up as they were in dry economic and demographic details, the officials of the Commission were probably immune to the charms of the naughty lady.

The arguments

Romania gained so much because she had a very good case in terms of the ethnographical, economic and strategic criteria on which the peacemakers in Paris based their decisions. Ethnographical considerations were particularly important to the Americans. Just before Romania re-entered the war in November 1918,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3/11, Allen Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 11 March 1920. He added, “Ld C[urzon] is very agreeable always & very sensible about things in general. It is a pity he is not more popular with the outside world as he knows a great deal about foreign politics.”

⁶⁶ Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London, 2001), 142-43.

⁶⁷ Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Volume 57, 241-42, Diary of Edith Benham, 11 April 1919. After their first meeting, Wilson called her “a brilliant woman” but a “rapid repeater” in conversation who was “travelling in high gear this morning.” Their lunch date on 11 April was a lively tussle in which Wilson was in “high gear” himself. Ibid., 193, 238-39, Diary of Dr Grayson, 10, 11 April 1919.

Secretary of State Robert Lansing sent the Romanian government a note in which American support for Greater Romania was unequivocal:

*The Government of the United States is not unmindful of the aspirations of the Roumanian people without as well as within the boundaries of the Kingdom. It has witnessed their struggles and sufferings and sacrifices in the cause of freedom from their enemies and their oppressors. With the spirit of national unity and the aspirations of the Roumanians everywhere the Government of the United States deeply sympathizes and will not neglect at the proper time to exert its influence that the just political and territorial rights of the Roumanian people may be obtained and made secure from all foreign aggression.*⁶⁸

But such ideas were also important to *New Europe*-inspired British officials like Allen Leeper. Leeper was one of the first to make the distinction between “pretentions” (*sic*) based on the treaty of 1916 and “our support of the cause of the union in one state of the whole Rumanian race”.⁶⁹ Allied leaders who would not be “tied fast” by the terms of a “legally lapsed” treaty would proceed instead by “working on ethnographical lines and uniting the great mass of Roumanian speaking people under one crown.” This was the pledge that King George (in a letter written for him by Curzon) made in February 1919 in answer to Romania’s Queen Marie. “In your letter you connect the two questions” – the treaty and the ethnographical case – “but they are really quite distinct,” and it was important “to recognise that the Treaty has also become obsolete because its principles conflict at more points than one with the new ideas upon which the future peace of Europe is about to be built up ... Nationality and self-determination will in the long run provide a more stable basis of union and progress ...”⁷⁰ Of course, the “new ideas” were those of Woodrow Wilson. The ethnic factor was the single most important consideration in the making of the Romanian settlement. For example, the ethnic composition of Transylvania favoured the Romanian cause, Romanians constituting more than half of the population. In 1919, the Commission on Romanian Affairs estimated (based on the census of 1910) that there were 1,472,021 Romanians and only 918,217 Magyars out of a total population of 2,678,376 in Transylvania. Large towns like Kolozsvár (Cluj), Marosvásárhely (Târgu-Mureş), Hermannstadt (Sibiu) and Kronstadt (Brasov) were mostly Magyar or German, but the Romanian peasantry

⁶⁸ FRUS, 1918, Supplement 1, Vol. 1, 785, Lansing to Vopicka, 5 November 1918. Paraphrased in Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3141, 436, Barclay telegram, 6 November 1918.

⁶⁹ Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3141, 548, note by Leeper, 14 December 1918. Leeper earlier made the distinction between the alleged “bribes” of the treaty and the true essence of Romania’s claim, “the principle of nationality and the rights of small peoples,” in A.W.A. Leeper, *The Justice of Rumania’s Cause* (London, 1917), 24.

⁷⁰ Foreign Office, Political Departments: General Correspondence, FO 371/3568, 325, King George to Queen Marie, 14 February 1919; *ibid.*, 337, “Missy” (Queen Marie) to “George”, 11 January 1919.

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were dominant in the rural areas. In Bessarabia, ruled by Russia since 1812, the towns were dominated by Russians and Jews (the capital, Kichinev, was 46% Jewish and 27% Russian), but it was mainly Romanians who populated the villages and the Commission acknowledged 1,710,000 Romanians (66%) in a population of 2,583, 900.⁷¹



De Martonne's ethnographical map, Transylvania:
Romanian-majority areas in red.⁷²

It was said of the Banat that the peoples “were of such varied origins that a chameleon placed on a coloured population-map of the Banat would explode”.⁷³ Romanians constituted the largest single people in the Banat (592,049 out of 1,582,133), but they were a majority only in the east (in the comitat of Krasso) and they were outnumbered by the Magyars and Swabian Germans (combined) in the centre (Temés) and by the Serbs in the west (Torontal).⁷⁴ The question to be answered in 1919 was whether the Banat was to be kept intact, as Romania urged, or broken up to reflect its disparate parts. The Commission (and, in due course, the Conference) chose the latter option. Almost one third of the Banat was to be joined to Serbia. In this part, the Serbs were the largest single component; the Commission's report recognised “the secular aspirations of the highly-developed Yugoslav populations inhabiting the south-western portion of the Banat and closely connected with Belgrade”. Hungary was to retain a small north-western portion which “depends

⁷¹ Conférence de la Paix 1919, Commission des Affaires Roumaines et Yougo-Slaves, FO 374/9, Procès-Verbal No. 20 (Annexes), 204, Tableaux Statistiques.

⁷² Ibid., FO 371/3566, 562.

⁷³ Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Between the Woods and the Water: On Foot to Constantinople: The Middle Danube to the Iron Gates* (London, 1986), 121.

⁷⁴ The full 1910 figures were 592,049 Romanians, 387,545 Germans, 284,329 Serbs, 221,509 Magyars, 22,131 Slovaks, 20,643 Jews. Conférence de la Paix 1919, Commission des Affaires Roumaines et Yougo-Slaves, FO 374/9, Procès-Verbal No. 20 (Annexes), 204, Tableaux Statistiques.

ethnographically and economically” on the Magyar town of Szeged. The rest of the Banat would go to Romania, this part including 516,371 out of the total of 592,049 Romanians in the Banat.⁷⁵ As Seymour noted, it was “impossible to satisfy both Rumanians and Serbs, and I think that both are going to be pretty sore.” Tardieu told him they would “not be able to travel either in Rumania, or Serbia, or Hungary, after this commission has finished.”⁷⁶

However, the ethnic factor was not decisive in every respect. For a start, the geographical distribution of peoples prevented a simple demarcation according to nationality. In Transylvania, the biggest concentration of Magyars was the Székelys of eastern Transylvania; isolated in a sea of Romanians, they were too far away to make their inclusion in Hungary a practicable option. In the areas to the west of Transylvania, the economic factor prevailed. This was largely a question of keeping the railway network intact: the British and French emphasis on economic viability gave Romania a sizeable strip including the Magyar towns of Arad, Nagyvárad and Szatmár, each in of one of the valley routes from the Transylvanian highlands and the three joined by a north-south railway line leading to the Maros River at Arad. The American experts, concerned about the strong Magyar majority there, tried to hold this strip of land for Hungary – “Our point of view is that all the land that is really Magyar in character ought to be left to the Hungarians” (Seymour) – and Robert Lansing raised the question in the Council of Foreign Ministers in May. Harold Temperley’s diary has Lansing almost predatory, “quite in accordance with the traditions of ‘the bird of freedom’” (the American eagle): the proposal to consign 600,000 Magyars to Romania, he said, “did not appear very just; in every case the decision seemed to have been given against the Hungarians.” But then, “after having made everyone very uncomfortable, Lansing suddenly withdrew his objections ... Lansing, having acted as Transpontine ‘enfant terrible’, withdrew.”⁷⁷ The Council of Ten accepted the proposed Romano-Hungarian frontier on 12 May.

In Bukovina, in the north, the population was “probably at least three-quarters Roumanian” when the Austrians annexed the territory in 1775.⁷⁸ However, Romanians had ceased to constitute the majority by 1880, when they were surpassed by the Ruthenians (a sub-group of the Ukrainians); the 1910 census gave

⁷⁵ So, almost 76,000 Romanians were consigned to Serbia. Report by the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia: Rumanian Frontiers, FO 608/49, 73-77, 6 April 1919. The best modern treatment (in English) of the Commission’s work, in relation to Hungarian territory, is Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary*, 80-83.

⁷⁶ *Letters from Charles Seymour*, 173, Seymour to Mr and Mrs Thomas Watkins, 24 February 1919.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 162, Seymour to Mr and Mrs Thomas Watkins, 15 February 1919. Otte, *Diaries of Harold Temperley*, 409-10, 8 May 1919. FRUS, IV, 672-3, The Council of Foreign Ministers: Minutes of Meetings, 8 May 1919. See also Papers of Allen Leeper (LEEP), 3/8, Allen Leeper to Rex Leeper, 8 May 1919. Transpontine: from across the (Atlantic) ocean.

⁷⁸ Charles Upson Clark, *United Roumania* (New York, 1932), 74. Mitrasca concurs, giving the Romanians 56,000 in a population of 70,000. Mitrasca, *Moldova: A Romanian Province*, 19.

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the Ruthenians 38.88% of the population, Romanians 34.38%, Germans 21.24% and Poles 4.55%. The British recommendations (written by Leeper) accepted that Ruthenians outnumbered Romanians but asserted that “the whole basis of cultural life in Bukovina is Roumanian” and argued that all of the economic and communication links were with Romania. The great monasteries, monuments and burial sites of Bukovina, dating back to the Middle Ages, were Romanian. Because “the Ukraine [Ruthenian] population is little developed culturally or politically” (“population peu avancée,” as Laroche put it), the Commission concluded that it would be “to the advantage of the Ruthenes of Bukovina to be associated with the Rumanians, whose religion they share, and whose co-operation is necessary to their development.” So, Romania was granted all of Bukovina except two small border areas – containing 85,000 Ruthenes and only 300 Romanians – which the Americans hoped to give to a possible Ruthenian state. The loss of these border areas would ensure that Bukovina’s Romanians were the single biggest group (albeit only 40% of the total) in the part of Bukovina gained by Romania.⁷⁹

The most radical departure from the principle of national self-determination came in relation to Romania’s frontier with Bulgaria. The Dobrudja was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878, when Northern Dobrudja was acquired by Romania and Southern Dobrudja by Bulgaria, but Southern Dobrudja was taken by Romania in the Second Balkan War of 1913. The Bulgarians, Germany’s allies from 1915, conquered the Dobrudja in 1916 and at the end of the war the Romanians expected to see it returned to them. However, while Northern Dobrudja had a clear Romanian majority, the claim to Southern Dobrudja could not be based on ethnicity. Southern Dobrudja contained an estimated 122,000 Turks, 112,000 Bulgarians, 10,000 Tartars and 7,000 Romanians, and, even if such figures are open to challenge, it was clear that Romania “lacked even a passing ethnical claim to the area”.⁸⁰ Allen Leeper provided a summary of the position:

Rumanian rule in [Northern] Dobrogea [sic] has not been free from blame but in 40 years Rumania has at least developed the country from the wilderness in which she found it ... The only actual fact of importance is that Dobrogea N[orth] of the 1913 frontier contains a 55% Rumanian majority, the Bulgars being in a minority of 15-18%. S[outh] of the 1913 frontier conditions are quite different. The population is almost entirely Turk (in the W[est]) & Bulgar (in the S[outh] E[ast]). Here on racial grounds Bulgaria has a case.

⁷⁹ British recommendations for Romanian Commission, FO 608/49, 28, 7 February 1919. Conférence de la Paix 1919, Commission des Affaires Roumaines et Yougo-Slaves, FO 374/9, Procès-Verbal No. 1, 13, 8 February 1919 (Laroche). Report by the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia: Rumanian Frontiers, FO 608/49, 75, 6 April 1919. The Commission gave figures of 273,254 Romanians and 305,102 Ruthenians in Bukovina, which went to 272,952 and 218,918, respectively, when the two northern areas were excluded. Conférence de la Paix 1919, Commission des Affaires Roumaines et Yougo-Slaves, FO 374/9, Procès-Verbal No. 20 (Annexes), 204-5, Tableaux Statistiques.

⁸⁰ Michael L. Dockrill and J. Douglass Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-23* (London, 1981), 97.

*Provisional British military occupation is the only possible solution for the moment, in spite of the unrest this causes to the Rumanian Govt..*⁸¹

The Bulgarian demand for Southern Dobrudja was strongly supported by the Americans, citing national self-determination.⁸² Most in the British delegation hoped that this could be agreed. However, the British and French refused absolutely to *compel* (or even to *ask*) an ally to surrender territory to an enemy. The decision, Leeper believed, lay with Romania: “such readjustment could only be made after friendly conversations with the Rumanian Govt..”⁸³ “It is important that the Rumanian Govt. themselves should be a consenting party” to the cession of Southern Dobrudja and that “Romanians should not be left with the feeling that they have been ‘robbed’ by their Allies to placate their enemies.”⁸⁴ In the Commission, on both 8 February and 3 March, Sir Eyre Crowe (Leeper’s boss) took the legalistic view that, because Southern Dobrudja was secured by Romania before the war, its future was beyond the remit of the Peace Conference; “Sir Eyre Crowe préfère cependant ne pas discuter la question.”⁸⁵ The Commission stated in its report on 6 April 1919 that it was not authorised “to recommend a modification of the frontier which would involve the cession to an enemy State of a territory forming de facto et de jure an integral part of an Allied State.”⁸⁶ The Romanians, angry about losing part of the Banat, never offered to give up Southern Dobrudja. The Americans pushed their view in the Council of Heads of Delegations between July and November, but the British and French were unyielding. The issue was not even mentioned in the Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria in November. Thus, in the words of a member of the Bulgarian Delegation, the settlement “triumphantly proclaimed the barbarous principle that no land can be claimed from the victors.”⁸⁷

It has been argued here that Romania gained territory not because of the wartime treaty that promised her so much, and not because of the dubious diplomatic skills of Ionel Brătianu, but because the Romanians had a strong case and it was effectively presented by Romanophiles like Tardieu, Martonne and Leeper. There

⁸¹ British Delegation, correspondence and papers relating to South and South-East Europe, 1919, FO 608/34, 202, note by Leeper, 23 January 1919.

⁸² There could be no question of returning a part of Europe to the defeated Turks.

⁸³ British Delegation, correspondence and papers relating to South and South-East Europe, 1919, FO 608/34, 230, note by Leeper, [6] February 1919.

⁸⁴ Ibid., FO 608/48, 383, note by Leeper, 25 January 1919. See also *ibid.*, FO 608/31, 333, note by Leeper, 31 March 1919.

⁸⁵ Conférence de la Paix 1919, Commission des Affaires Roumaines et Yougo-Slaves, FO 374/9, Procès-Verbal No. 1, 9, 8 February 1919; No. 10, 89, 3 March 1919 (Crowe).

⁸⁶ Report by the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia: Rumanian Frontiers, FO 608/49, 76, 6 April 1919. Conférence de la Paix 1919, Commission des Affaires Roumaines et Yougo-Slaves, FO 374/9, Procès-Verbal No. 20 (Annexes), 196, Frontières de la Roumanie, 6 April 1919.

⁸⁷ G.P. Genov, *Bulgaria and the Treaty of Neuilly* (Sofia, 1935), 17.

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was one other reason, however, that tended to shine its harsh light on every issue, the simple idea that these people are our friends and those are our enemies. This was stated most starkly and frequently by the French, but it was also evident in the British unwillingness to coerce the Romanians over Southern Dobrudja, and even the Americans were fully aware of the past sins of the Hungarians and Bulgarians. Wilson himself “found the Bulgarians the most avaricious and brutal of the smaller nations that had to be dealt with in the war and in the settlement of the terms of peace.”⁸⁸ The interest of Communist Russia in Bessarabia was ultimately set aside for a rather different reason, but it might be said that in this instance an ally had *become* an enemy.⁸⁹ The only question on which a principled compromise was achieved, on the Banat, was one where Romania and Serbia, two Allied states, were in dispute. Crowe stated that “ethnographical difficulties” between Romania and Hungary were one thing – they would “naturally favour their ally, Romania, rather than their enemy, Hungary” – but when such differences arose between Romania and Serbia, both allies, they had to strive to satisfy one claimant without generating resentment in the other and causing hostility between them.⁹⁰

The consequence of making a settlement which dealt severely with losers was that they became revisionist and eventually allied themselves with those who would undo the hated treaties. This brought the utter destruction of the settlement in 1940. Bulgaria was effectively given Southern Dobrudja by Hitler in 1940 and she joined the Germans in invading Greece and Yugoslavia, the beneficiaries of Neuilly, in 1941. Hitler gave the Hungarians, full allies of Germany, northern Transylvania in 1940: “Hitler is simply cutting the baby in half.”⁹¹ The Soviets forced Romania to surrender Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in 1940, this was reversed in 1941 (with Operation Barbarossa), but the Russians came back again in 1944. Romania regained northern Transylvania in 1947, but Southern Dobrudja, Bessarabia (since 1991 the independent state of Moldova) and northern Bukovina were lost for good. Romania remains much bigger than she was in 1918, but the settlement that created Greater Romania did not survive the vengeance of its enemies.

⁸⁸ Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Volume 66, 367, Wilson to Colby, 15 November 1920.

⁸⁹ One cannot do justice here to the American effort, ultimately unavailing, to prevent the dismantling of Russia.

⁹⁰ Conférence de la Paix 1919, Commission des Affaires Roumaines et Yougo-Slaves, FO 374/9, Procès-Verbal No. 3, 25, 13 February 1919. Also in David Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (London, 1938), II, 919-20. As Nicolson put it, “They [the Powers] did not mind so much about Transylvania and the Bukowina (which belonged to the enemy), but they minded terribly about the Banat which was claimed, and with considerable justice, by the Jugo-Slavs.” Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, 135.

⁹¹ Olivia Manning, *The Balkan Trilogy* (London, 1987), 468.

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