

MIODRAG CIURUȘCHIN, *POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS OF ROMANIA AND SERBIA BETWEEN 1903 AND 1914* [RELAȚIILE POLITICO-DIPLOMATICE ALE ROMÂNIEI CU SERBIA ÎN PERIOADA 1903–1914]. TIMISOARA: MIRTON, 2010, pp. 394.

*Reviewed by Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović**

The monograph entitled: *Political and Diplomatic Relations of Romania and Serbia Between 1903 and 1914* (Romanian original: *Relațiile politico-diplomatice ale României cu Serbia în perioada 1903–1914*) by Timisoara historian Miodrag Ciuruschin /Ciurușchin/ is a reviewed and amended version of this author's PhD thesis, on which he was engaged from 2003 to 2009. The monograph was prepared based on published and unpublished archival material on the relations of Romania and Serbia in the period between 1903 and 1914. The research was performed in the following archives in Romania: Romanian National Archives in Bucharest and Timisoara (*Arhivele Naționale ale României din București și Timișoara*), Diplomatic Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest (*Arhivele Diplomatice ale Ministerului Afacerilor Externe*), Archives of National Library, and Archives of Romanian Academy of Sciences and Arts (*Arhiva Bibliotecii Naționale și Arhiva Academiei Române din București*), and in Serbia: Archives of Serbia, and Archives of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In addition to the Foreword by Romanian historian Dr Ioan Munteanu from the Timisoara Western University, and the Introduction, the monograph consists of

four chapters, Conclusion and Bibliography. Miodrag Ciuruschin was awarded for this monograph by the Romanian Academy of Sciences and Arts, as well as by the Romanian Society for Historical Science (*Societatea de Științe Istorice din România*) in 2010.

In the introductory Chapter, the author indicates the research framework and the main topics included in this study. The aspects of Serbian-Romanian political, diplomatic, military, economic and cultural relations in the period between 29 May/11 June 1903 and 15/28 July 1914 have not been studied by either Serbian or Romanian historians in the context of wider international relations so far; only individual segments of this dynamic historic period have been studied. The author's intention was to present the status and relations of Serbia and Romania in this book, in the period when the international political life was characterised by tensions in the relations between the great powers and the presence of a large number of hot spots, which constituted a potential threat to world peace. The research was also extended to relations between the states of Southeast Europe,

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as well as to relations between Romania and Serbia with Austria-Hungary, Russia and other great powers, to the extent in which they influenced the Romanian-Serbian relations. Taking into account that the Romanian-Serbian relations at the start of the twentieth century had not been studied thoroughly and systematically in the historiography so far, the author paid special attention to the unpublished archive sources in the Serbian language and in the Romanian language. Simultaneously, the use of press and other written sources, in addition to abundant literature sources, gives this research a value of a referent scientific study, important for understanding the international relations in Southeast Europe on the eve of the Great War (1914–1918).

Chapter One, *Good Neighbourly Relations (Relații de bună vecinătate)* deals with the relations between Romania and Serbia from the May Coup on 28/29 May (11/12 June) 1903 to the outbreak of the First Balkan War on 6 (18) October 1912. The events from this period have not attracted a great deal of attention of historians, who have studied the Serbian-Romanian relations so far, relying on the opinion that the two countries had good neighbourly relations in the period from 1903 to 1912 and that no important events occurred in this field over the period. With this monograph, Ciuruschin has made an effort to demonstrate that the Serbian-Romanian relations were very intensive in that period, and that they had their important place in the mosaic of political events, which made Southeast Europe — or more precisely the Balkans, an unstable region. Conditions were created in the Balkans, especially after the Annexation crisis, for an outbreak of conflict which could grow into a war of wider proportions. Later events in fact proved this.

As far as Serbian history is concerned, in this chapter the author paid special attention to the preparation and ex-

ecution of the May Coup in which the Karadjordjević dynasty seized the Serbian throne from the Obrenović dynasty. The taking over of the Serbian throne by Peter I Karadjordjević (1903–1921) prompted changes in the Serbian national and foreign policy, which definitely influenced the relations with Romania, too. From diplomatic reports by Romanian ambassador to Belgrade, Edgar Mavrocordat, the Romanian public was well informed about the events which took place. King Carol I (1866–1914), political elites, and the general public in Romania condemned the assassination of Serbian king Alexander Obrenović and Queen Draga Mašin; however, Ciuruschin's research shows that such an opinion in Romania was soon prevailingly replaced by the opinion that the ousting of the dynasty had been necessary, since it had brought Serbia "to the verge of disaster" (p. 17). The coronation of King Peter I in September 1904, raised a great interest among the Romanian diplomacy, and the presence of high state official Edgar Mavrocordat, plenipotentiary of King Carol I, was an opportunity to renew the good relations between the two countries. The Macedonian problem absorbed and influenced the Romanian-Serbian relations in the sense of inevitable drawing closer of the two countries, since they had common interests in Macedonia, before all in the sense of preventing the spread of Bulgarian influence in that region. The author therefore paid special attention in the first chapter to the convergence of Romania and Serbia which was especially prominent in the period from 1903 to 1914, owing to the spread of Bulgarian influence in the Balkans.

Chapter Two, titled *Relations between Romania and Serbia at the Time of Bosnian Crisis (Relațiile României cu Serbia în cursul crizei bosniace)* consists of five parts in which the history of Serbia and Europe at the time of the crisis instigated by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in

1908 was presented. Ciuruschin emphasises that Romanian diplomacy played an important role as a moderator between Austria-Hungary and Serbia in the sense of peaceful resolving of the crisis which threatened to instigate conflicts of wider proportions. The annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina caused much protest in Serbia, as well as further complication of the relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia which were engaged in the Tariff War as of 1906. At the same time, the outbreak of the Annexation Crisis caused concerns among the great powers, which were not ready for a war. At the time of one of the greatest international crises, in the years immediately before the Great War broke out, Romania was making efforts to calm the diplomatic tensions between Serbia and its powerful neighbour, Austria-Hungary. Taking into account that Romania joined the Triple Alliance in 1883, its foreign policy was tied to Austria-Hungary and Germany. However, according to Ciuruschin, Romania found itself in a very difficult situation during the Annexation Crisis (1908–1909) with regard to its relations with Serbia, with which it wanted to maintain the position of a loyal neighbour. In the end of February 1909, King Carol I and Prime Minister Ionel Brătianu /Ionel Brătianu/ warned the Government of Serbia and King Peter I Karadjordjević that Serbia was in great danger of being attacked by the Austro-Hungarian army. Ciuruschin argues that the Annexation Crisis contributed to raising awareness among political circles of the danger of Austro-Hungarian incursion into the Balkans. In the conclusion of the second chapter, the author maintains that Europe was not in danger of war breaking out at the time of the Annexation Crises, since the great powers were not ready for a war.

Chapter Three: *Romania and Serbia in the Period of Balkan Wars (România și Serbia în timpul războaielor balcanice)*

presents the Serbian-Romanian relations in the period of the important changes in the Balkans between 1912 and 1913. Special attention is paid to the place and role of Romania in international relations and in the Balkans. Romanian diplomacy promoted active foreign policy, maintaining diplomatic relations with over 14 countries. In the Balkans, it advocated preserving the *status quo* and the balance of powers between the Balkan countries since it was the only way to ensure national security. Continuing the policy from the previous period, according to Ciuruschin, Romania retained its neutral standpoint towards Serbia, and the convergence between Romania and Serbia occurred in the period when a rift began to show through in the Balkan Alliance, due to "expansionist aspirations of Bulgaria" (p. 109). As it already became apparent during the First Balkan War that the defeat of the Ottoman Empire would result in a disturbance of balance of powers in the Balkans until then and that the *status quo antebellum* would not hold, Romania saw its interest in strengthening its strategic border in Southern Dobruja. Between December 1912 and March 1913, Serbian diplomacy assumed a position, which Ciuruschin describes as "ambiguous", towards the Bulgarian-Romanian dispute. Bearing in mind that, based on its treaty with Bulgaria, Serbia was obliged to secure military aid to Bulgaria, a potential Romanian-Bulgarian war could deteriorate the Romanian-Serbian relations. On the other hand, Serbia had an unresolved situation with Bulgaria on the issue of central parts of Macedonia. The author emphasises that Serbia expected support from Romania in case of a threat of Austria-Hungary or Bulgaria. However, King Carol I and Romanian Prime Minister Titu Maiorescu could not accept signing of any kind of treaty with Serbia, due to the obligation to abide by the military agreements signed between Romania and

Austria-Hungary in November 1912, and the convention of alliance with Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy, renewed in February 1913. Nevertheless, according to Ciuruschin, Romanian diplomacy encouraged the Serbian Government to withstand the pressure of Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria and to wait for the right moment to fulfil its national interests (p. 300). Ciuruschin also paid attention to the Bucharest Peace Conference, after which the positions of Serbia and Romania were reinforced, especially in terms of territorial enlargements, as well as in the field of diplomacy, which shaped their mutual relations.

The period from the end of the Second Balkan War, up to the Sarajevo assassination, Austro-Hungarian ultimatum and the declaration of war on Serbia are presented in Chapter Four, *Friendly Relations between Romania and Serbia between Treaty of Bucharest and beginning of World War I (Relații amicale între România și Serbia, de la Pacea de la București până la începutul primului război mondial)*. Over this period, Serbia and Romania endeavoured to maintain the situation which was created after the end of the Balkan Wars. The author presented an analysis of joint diplomatic actions of the two countries with the aim of maintaining peace in the Balkans and thwarting the aspirations of Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary which were targeting the preservation of the newly-created situation. Since autumn 1913 already, Austro-Hungarian diplomacy exercised pressure on Bucharest with the aim of distancing Romania from Serbia. As the relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia were becoming increasingly tense, Romanian diplomacy found itself in a situation, as Ciuruschin noticed, “to have formally been an ally of Austria-Hungary, and a friend of Serbia”. Urged by France, Russia and the United Kingdom, Romania attempted to prevent the outbreak of war, through efforts to

negotiate an extension of the deadline for Serbian response to the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, without success though. Germany wanted war, while France, the United Kingdom, Russia and Italy wanted to avoid it until the last moment. This is when the period of peace in the Balkans ended — a period in which, according to the author, Romania and Serbia had successful political and diplomatic collaboration and during which they advocated their mutual interests.

The monograph of Miodrag Ciuruschin which contains almost four hundred pages of text makes a valuable contribution to the exploration of history of Serbian-Romanian diplomatic relations. At the same time, this monograph is a contribution to better knowledge of international relations in Europe from the beginning of the twentieth century to the outbreak of World War I. The use of sources and literature of both Serbian and Romanian provenance is a valuable feature of this study which was facilitated by the author's competent command of both the languages. The monograph *Political and Diplomatic Relations of Romania and Serbia in Period between 1903 and 1914* shed light on a number of important aspects of the Serbian-Romanian diplomatic relations in the years before the Great War (1914–1918). As a piece of work which can enrich the expert knowledge, it is recommended to historians, but also to wider readership interested in acquiring deeper knowledge of history of Serbia, Romania, and Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century.