The Role of St. Petersburg in the Development of Russian-Romanian Cultural Relations

(Second Half of the 19th Century–Beginning of the 20th Century)

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Introduction

In 2018 the world community marked 140 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Romania, which reignited the researchers' interest in the history of the emergence of cultural ties between these countries. Undoubtedly, St. Petersburg—the capital of the Russian Empire—played an important role in the development and extension of cultural contacts between Russia and Romania.

In the past decade, both Romanian and Russian researchers have turned to the history of the Russian-Romanian relations of the second half of the 19th century–beginning of the 20th century. Among the researchers in the area of Russian-Romanian relations we find the prominent historian V. N. Vinogradov, who studied various aspects of these relations for half a century. His monograph *A Brief History of Romania: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* was published in 1987. His numerous articles addressed, in particular, a number of issues relating to foreign policy, socio-political concepts, and the economic development of the two countries.[1]

B. B. Cross studied the evolution of Romania's foreign policy between 1908 and 1916, from a close alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany to joining the war against them. The author noted that Russian diplomacy tried to improve relations with Romania, emphasizing their common interests in the Balkans.[2]

In 2004, a collective monograph, *The History of Romania*, was published, which was translated into Russian in 2005.[3] The coordinators of this work were Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan. The authors' appeal to the Russian readers emphasized that after gaining freedom from ideological, and in some cases, from methodological canons, the authors became free to study and present historical events, stressing what they considered to be the core of the Romanian history.

A significant contribution was made by A. B. Ceobanu. The author explored a number of issues in his articles—the matrimonial ties of the Romanian diplomats, the participation of Romanian representatives in the coronation celebrations on the occasion of Alexander III's and Nicholas II's ascension to the throne, or N. Kretzulescu's activities in Russia.[4]

In 2014, a number of diplomatic documents of the Russian representatives in Romania, dating to the 1880s–1890s, were published.[5] A number of publications cover the activities of some representatives of Russian diplomacy in Bucharest.[6]

The papers devoted to the analysis of the Russian-Romanian cultural relations in 1880s–1910s are few in number. The publications by M. V. Domosiletskaya, A. I. Colin, and A. S. Stykalin reveal the contribution of the Russian scientists of the second half of the 19th century–beginning of the 20th century in the study of the Romanian written language, literature and folklore.[7]

Sources

The work involves both archival sources and publicly disclosed reference materials. The Russian State Historical Archive (St. Petersburg) contains a quite significant collection of sources covering the Russian-Romanian relations in the 19th–early 20th centuries. The bulk of the documents are related to trade and economic issues or to foreign policy matters. In the first place, their materials covered the documents of the department of foreign affairs, diplomatic missions (documents on the composition and numbers of civil servants, memos on administrative management, reports of Russian consuls, various financial statements). As concerns church management, these documents comprised information on the Orthodox Church in the Danube principalities, on the resettlement of Old Believers from Romania and Austria-Hungary to Russia in the early 20th century, on church administration in Southern Bessarabia. The documents providing evidence of the cultural ties between Russia and Romania in the 1880s–1910s were found in Archival Collection 733 (Department of Public Education)[8] and Archival Collection 1497 (Commission for International Exchange of Publications under the Ministry of Public Education).[9] The documents of Archival Collection 796 (Secretariat of the Synod) were also consulted.[10]

The results of the censuses of 1890 and 1900 were published as a series of tables, complemented by an essay on the organization of censuses and containing data on the age, gender, family, language and professional status of St. Petersburg's residents. Our attention was captured by the data placed in the table "Distribution of foreigners by age and by state" of the 1890-census edition,[11] as well as the table "Distribution of foreign nationals by 5-year age groups and by states" of the 1900 edition.[12]

In addition, data from such annual reference books as *Petersburg At-Large* and *Address Book of Petersburg* were used. *Petersburg At-Large* is an address book and reference directory of St. Petersburg published annually from 1894 to 1917 by A. S. Suvorin (between 1915 and 1917 it was called *Petrograd At-Large*).[13] The directory consisted of four main sections containing information about the central and local departments, industrial

and commercial enterprises of the city, as well as the alphabetical index of the residents of the capital and the suburbs, plus the alphabetical list of streets of the city and its environs.

Another reference book for pre-revolutionary Russia was *Address Book of Petersburg* published in 1892–1902 under P. O. Yablonsky's editorship.[14] The yearly book contained information about institutions and individuals, being structurally divided into four main sections: the list of St. Petersburg houses in alphabetical order with information about the householders and land plots as well as the institutions housed in them; the list of establishments, institutions and individuals of certain professions, compiled according to departmental, thematic and professional criteria; commercial and industrial information section. The end of the directory featured a consolidated alphabetical list of individuals, with their addresses.

Russian-Romanian Cultural Ties

IN THE 1880s–1910s, these contacts were maintained and developed owing to the efforts of Russian statesmen and scholars, as well as to the activity of the Romanians who resided in St. Petersburg.

It is worth noting that the number of Romanian citizens recorded in the population censuses of St. Petersburg in 1890 and 1900 was initially insignificant, but it gradually increased (see Table 1). In 1890, 53 nationals from the Kingdom of Romania lived in the Russian capital, and in 1900 their number increased to 119. In 1890, the number of men (27) actually coincided with the number of women (26). By 1900,

TABLE 1. AGE OF ROMANIAN CITIZENS LIVING IN ST. PETERSBURG IN 1890 AND 1900

Age	1890			1900		
	Men	Women	TOTAL	Men	Women	TOTAL
0–5	6	7	13	10	7	17
6–10	2	0	2	3	1	4
11–15	3	1	4	3	3	6
16–20	2	3	5	5	4	9
21–25	2	4	6	9	7	16
26–30	2	2	4	12	6	18
31–35	2	4	6	9	6	15
36–40	4	1	5	11	2	13
41–45	1	1	2	9	3	12
46–50	3	2	5	3	1	4
51–55	0	1	1	2	0	2
56–60	0	0	0	1	2	3
TOTAL	27	26	53	77	42	119

SOURCES: St. Petersburg on 15 December 1890 census. SPb., 1891, part 1, no. 1, 86–89; St. Petersburg on the census of 15 December 1900 (The City Council statistical office), ed. N. A. Fedulova. SPb., 1903, no. 1, 184.

men were significantly more; according to that year's census, the number of Romanian male nationals was 77, and that of females 42. In 1890, mostly young people aged 16 to 40 resided in St. Petersburg, one third of them were children, and only 8 people belonged to the age group 41–55. In 1900, the ratio of age groups changed—the number of children decreased, and the ratio of people over 40 increased in the adult population group.

Understandably, the Romanian nationals made up quite a small fraction of the total number of foreigners residing in St. Petersburg at that time. Of the 22,780 foreign nationals who were recorded following the census of 1890, more than half were German citizens (13,274); 2,100 persons were French nationals; 1,940 – British nationals: 1,325 were nationals of Austria-Hungary. It is interesting that, despite a slight reduction in the total number of foreigners in St. Petersburg by 1900 (to 22,336), the number of Romanians in the Russian capital more than doubled by that time.

The representatives of the diplomatic corps of Romania accredited in St. Petersburg played a vital role in strengthening the Russian-Romanian relations.

It is interesting to note that some families of Romanian diplomats had long-standing ties with Russia and St. Petersburg. For instance, during the period under review, three assignees of the renowned Ghica family were staying in the Russian capital as representatives of the Romanian diplomatic service: I. G. Ghika, who was the head of the Romanian Legation in St. Petersburg in 1878–1881, G. Ghica, who held the same post in 1886–1889, and Emil Ghica who replaced his predecessor in 1889. These representatives of the large Ghica family were related to Russian noble families such as Blaramberg, Keshko, O'Rurk, or Kol'covyh-Masal'skih.[15] It is also known that a sumptuous funeral of the Moldavian hospodar Ghica took place in Petersburg during Catherine II's time (the second half of 18th century), capturing the imagination of the capital's residents, as described by M. I. Pylyaev.[16] Also, Moldavian hospodar's daughter Princess S. K. Ghica lived and died in Petersburg. She was buried at Lazarevskoye cemetery in 1818 (her grave has survived to our days—it is quite a spectacular monument featuring an architectural portal with a haut-relief depicting three mourners).[17]

N. Kretzulescu and Gh. Rosetti-Solescu also had close family ties with Russia. N. Kretzulescu came to Petersburg in 1881; one of the possible reasons for his appointment was the diplomat's matrimonial ties in the Russian society. Kretzulescu's wife was S. I. Yakovenko, daughter of the former secretary of the Russian consulate in Bucharest, and later director of the postal service of the Romanian principalities. Gh. Rosetti-Solescu, who was Romania's extraordinary delegate and plenipotentiary minister in 1895–1911, was married to the daughter of a Russian diplomat N. K. Giers.

The complete staff of the Romanian embassy in Petersburg in the 1880–1910s can be found in the reference books *Petersburg At-Large* and *Address Book of Petersburg*. For instance, E. Statesku worked for a long time in Petersburg as the first secretary of the legation; G. Filality and N. Cantakuzino were legation secretaries at various times. E. Teodorescu performed the duties of interpreter for a number of years.

Some of them contributed to the development of Russian-Romanian cultural ties. As an example, the correspondence of K. P. Pobedonostsev, chief procurator of the Synod, with the Archbishop of Kishinev, Sergey (N. I. Lyapidevsky), contains information about

N. Kretzulescu's requests for help in placing N. Niculescu and L. Scarlatescu in the Kishinev Seminary in 1885 and 1886, respectively. As reported by Pobedonostsev, Father Sergey assumed that these persons would continue their education in the Kiev Theological Academy, so in the Kishinev Seminary they should learn Russian and prepare for admission to the Academy. Kretzulescu took care of all the costs associated with the presence of Niculescu and Scarlatescu in Kishinev. He believed that the education received there would contribute to the successful theological career of these young people in Romania, and they, in turn, would work to strengthen the Orthodox faith in the country.[18]

The scientific ties also developed with the assistance of the Romanian legation. In 1902, a number of statistical handbooks and scientific papers covering various issues pertaining to agricultural development were delivered to Russia through the agency of Minister Plenipotentiary Gh. Rosetti-Solescu.

The issues of cooperation in the sphere of science and education were also considered at the governmental level. In 1904–1908, the Ministry of Public Education of Russia and the Romanian government exchanged correspondence regarding the possibility to exchange research papers for a doctoral degree. The Romanian government expressed interest in such cooperation, and appropriate instructions were given to the chancellors of the universities in Iaşi and Bucharest.

This work was of great importance, since Romanian printed publications did not in fact reach Russia. S. Ciobanu, in particular, wrote about the lack of scientific literature in the Romanian language: there were no books in the Romanian language in the Kiev University library in 1910.[19]

The work of the professors of St. Petersburg University also contributed to the strengthening of scientific contacts. The prominent scholars-philologists P. A. Cyrcu and A. I. Yatsimirsky were earnest promoters of Romanian literature and culture in Russia. P. A. Cyrcu introduced into scientific discourse a number of important Slavic-Romanian monuments found in the collection of the Imperial Public Library. A. I. Yatsimirsky translated several Romanian literary works. These researchers made a tremendous contribution to the development of the Romanian written language; their papers on Romanian folklore, history and culture hold a valuable place in the scientific heritage.

It is important to note that at the time when A. I. Yatsimirsky was teaching at St. Petersburg University he began corresponding with S. Ciobanu, the future eminent historian, a member of the Academy of Sciences of Romania. At the same time, one of S. Ciobanu's early works was published in the *Proceedings of the Neophilological Society* in St. Petersburg.[20] While in St. Petersburg, A. I. Yatsimirsky corresponded with and consulted another future academician, the outstanding Romanian historian and politician Silviu Dragomir, who studied archival sources on the history of the Russian-Romanian relations of the 17th century.[21]

It should be noted that, in addition to official channels, the cultural contacts were maintained through personal contacts and correspondence. As an example, one of the prominent public figures of Romania, Z. C. Arbore-Ralli (Zamfir C. Arbore), a publicist and literary critic, the father of the outstanding Romanian painter N. Arbore, spent his student years in Petersburg and was an organizer of the student unrest of 1868–1869. After he emigrated, he did not lose ties with Russia; the multipage corre-

spondence preserved at the Russian State Archives of Literature and Art (Moscow) testifies to his intensive contacts.[22] Z. C. Arbore-Ralli's addressees were M. M. Stasyulevich, P. A. Kropotkin, and V. G. Korolenko.

At the end of the 19th century, Romania's foreign policy did not involve an active interaction with Russia. The new international situation at the beginning of the 20th century determined Romania to develop a new foreign policy strategy that required a Russian-Romanian rapprochement.[23] Despite the cautious attitude towards everything connected with Russia on the part of the official circles, Russian literature became widespread in Romania; the works of I. S. Turgenev, L. N. Tolstoy, F. M. Dostoevsky, A.P. Chekhov, M. Gorky and other writers were repeatedly translated.[24]

Conclusions

Turning to the documents and materials from the Russian archives and from the published reference editions opened new opportunities for examining the Russian-Romanian cultural ties of the period 1880–1910. Owing to the Russian-Romanian cooperation in the sphere of culture and science in 1880–1910, the Russian society gained an opportunity to get acquainted with the Romanian scientific literature; this was a favorable time for the development of scholarly contacts in the humanities. This was achieved in many ways owing to the work of specialists in the field of philology and literary studies, to the efforts of Russian and Romanian writers and publicists. ❑

Notes

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Abstract

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Keywords

Russia, St. Petersburg, Romania, cultural ties, diplomatic corps