

Alexandru Vaida-Voevod in Paris

His Relations with the U.S. Delegation at the Peace Conference (1919)

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“We are not allowed to do any injustice, but we must avoid committing suicide by granting privileges.”

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EXPERTS FROM both counties have investigated the history of Romanian-American relations until 1918 and during the Paris Peace Conference. Generally, the studies and articles on this matter—poorly documented as they were, given the limited interest of the United States in the Romanian-inhabited areas—owed much to the influence of the Romanian emigrants, most of them originating from Transylvania and Bukovina. During the First World War, the Romanian community in the U.S., along with the Serbs, the Czechs, the Poles, the Slovaks etc., brought the Romanian question and its issues concerning the future status of the Romanian community to the attention of the American public opinion, with the support of the main daily newspapers. The American government’s view on the future of Austria-Hungary also raised the interest in the aspirations of the nationalities under the House of Habsburg. As to the Romanian historians, concerned with the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference, they focused more on the period when Ion I. C. Brătianu led the Romanian delegation and less

on the few months between the end of 1919 and March 1920, when Alexandru Vaida-Voevod replaced the liberal prime minister. His memoirs and the vast correspondence, written when the war was coming to a close and the peace treaties were being signed, fully contributed to the clarification of some issues pertaining to the history of those days and to the personal opinions of a politician belonging to the former Austrian monarchy about the U.S., about President Wilson, and about his political-diplomatic entourage.¹

Before his arrival in Paris in 1919, Vaida's opinions about the American President had been extremely positive, as the Fourteen Points made the Romanians' aspirations for self-determination internationally legitimate. Along with the Romanians, all the nationalities in the empire had very favorable reactions to Wilson and to everything he stood for. As one of the heads of the Romanian National Party, Vaida fully contributed to the dissemination and reception of the American view concerning the need to take Austria-Hungary apart.

The impact of the Wilsonian doctrine in Hungary was indeed surprising. In a meeting with an Allied mission in Budapest, Prime Minister M. Károlyi even declared that his political platform was solely "Wilson, Wilson, Wilson." Moreover, the Hungarian capital was literally covered with posters bearing the picture of the American President, while the slogan of the day was "The only peace for Hungary is Wilsonian peace." Certainly, the politicians in Budapest endorsed the principles of self-determination, hoping that historical Hungary was going to be preserved, and the Romanians, Serbs and Slovaks would still remain within the borders of 1867. That was not the case. Budapest's position was determined by the stance the American President took in 1917 and until mid-1918. It was the period when the U.S. had no intention of recommending the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. In exchange, they suggested federalization, trialism, or a reorganization of the dualist formula through the introduction of democratic reforms and an extended autonomy for the provinces constituting the empire. Furthermore, the Commission established in Washington, in charge with the preparation of the documentation for the American delegation, repeatedly recommended the federal solution to the president and to the Department of State. Thus, on 2 April 1917, Lansing had a meeting with a Romanian delegation, where he stated that the U.S. would not support the territorial claims leading to the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. It was only in the summer of 1918 that Wilson began to take into consideration the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy, due to the contribution of the State Secretary, Robert Lansing. The head of the American diplomacy argued in several memoranda that the preservation of Austria-Hungary would not mitigate the conflicts between nationalities, but would instead create instability in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, on 10 May 1918, he asked Wilson to publicly state his support for the dismemberment of the empire; on June 24 he brought up the same issue. In this

context, the decision was made to begin an official dialogue with the emigrants' associations in the U.S., as well as in England and in France.

From this perspective, a crucial important moment was the White House meeting, in September 1918, with the leaders of the Serbs, Czechoslovaks, Poles and Romanians. The talks with the president opened a dialogue that ultimately changed the administration's position on their aspirations to separate from Austria-Hungary. As a matter of fact, on October 26, in Philadelphia, the emigrants originating from the empire declared their "independence." The American Romanian associations took part in these events, and Vasile Stoica's contacts with Lansing, as well as with Colonel House and William C. Bullitt, etc., had a positive role in furthering the Romanian political project.

The impact of the U.S. President's Fourteen Points was extremely strong. At the beginning of 1918, when he was in Vienna, Vaida-Voevod met his friends from the political circles of the capital, whom he knew since the beginning of his cooperation with Archduke Francis Ferdinand's entourage. Milan Hodža, Karel Stodola, Kristóffy, Juncker, Rittinger and Georg de la Pottere all took part in these discussions. The latter, having close connections with the Imperial Court, launched a violent statement against Wilson, accusing him that, by his declaration, he "was obviously aiming at instigating the Slavic and non-Magyar peoples to rebellion."²² Georg de la Pottere also asked Vaida and the other national representatives not to welcome the ideas promoted by the U.S. President in his Declaration. Vaida's answer was negative. Moreover, Rittinger, a Swabian from Banat serving as an officer in the Imperial Army, asked for their support in order to write to Wilson about the Transylvanian Swabians' problem and their right to support the political project foreshadowing the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Juncker, a pro-imperial Viennese journalist, was also trying to persuade Vaida that, on behalf of the Romanian National Party's leadership, the Romanians should draw up an answer that he promised to publish in the newspaper. He received the same negative answer: "Dear editor, you will see for yourself that you will face a unanimous refusal."²³

The political-military events of 1918 and the beginning of the dissolution of the empire in the fall of the same year confirmed the Romanian commitment to the Wilsonian principles. On October 12, the Romanian National Party leaders held a meeting in the house of Aurel Lazăr, a lawyer from Oradea. On this occasion, in the context of the Fourteen Points, they discussed a draft of the Self-Determination Declaration of the Romanians in Transylvania, drawn up by Vaida. The latter, in his capacity as a member of the Budapest Parliament, was going to present it publicly during the session of the Hungarian assembly. There were fears concerning a possible violent attack against him. This is what Vaida declared about this possibility in a discussion with the journalist Jenő Rudas:

“Please, tell them that I shall kiss the hand of the one who hits me first, for then I shall be certain that on the next day Wilson will have my declaration on his table.”⁴

On October 18, Vaida read the Declaration, obviously received with hostility by the Hungarian members of the Parliament. His speech praised the merits of the U.S. President. After this major event anticipating the union of the Romanians in Hungary with Romania, he left for Vienna, eager to see that the Declaration reached the White House. He therefore made use of his relations with the Czechs, especially with one of their leaders, Stanek, well known for his connections with the United States. Shortly afterwards, Vaida’s text reached the Department of State. Following the Romanian decision and the dialogue with the representatives of the Romanian community in the U.S., the Department of State made public its position to support Romania at the upcoming Peace Conference in Paris.

The speech delivered by Vaida in the Budapest Parliament, bearing the mark of Wilsonianism, had a particular echo in Washington. Inspired both by the U.S. President’s principles and by the self-determination tradition of the Romanian national movement, it played a very important role in the decision of the American administration with regard to the union of Transylvania with Romania. On 1 November 1918, the Declaration and Vaida’s speech reached the White House. A few days later, on November 5, the U.S. government publicly declared its support for the Romanian aspirations.⁵ The two documents drew the American experts’ attention on Vaida. Their publication, with positive comments, in *The New Europe*, under a suggestive title, “The Wilsonian Spirit in Budapest,” also had a contribution, being a tacit recognition of Vaida’s affiliation to the Wilsonian doctrine. Furthermore, the two documents were also published on 7 November 1918 in the official journal—*Daily Review of the Foreign Press, Enemy Press Supplement*—edited by the Department of State. As a matter of fact, the same journal published other political documents of the Romanian political leaders in Transylvania (declarations of the Romanian National Council concerning the negotiations with Oszkár Jászi in Arad, etc.).

Vaida’s political destiny was influenced by his appointment as head of the foreign relations department of the Ruling Council, set up by the National Assembly’s Decision of 1 December 1918. This institution stood for a provisional government whose mission was to prepare the union of Transylvania with Romania, under Iuliu Maniu’s presidency. It was in this capacity that Vaida took part as a member of the Romanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.

He talked to Maniu about his position and mandate within the delegation, which were determined, on the short term, by the information received from Viorel V. Tilea, Ioan Rațiu’s nephew, who was in Geneva at the beginning of

1919. There he met the American professor Herron, who had chaired the Congress of Central European Nationalities.⁶ Herron, who had close connections with the White House, suggested to him that Romania should invite U.S. expert teams to Transylvania in order to directly assess the interethnic relations there. Tilea was recommended by the American emissary to the U.S. ambassador in Paris, with the request that the latter, in his turn, should introduce him to Colonel House, President Wilson's closest adviser. Tilea's contact with Herron, followed by the meeting with a leader of the Republican Party, contributed to the outlining of an informal mandate for the talks Vaida was going to have with the U.S. delegation in Paris. First and foremost, he was suggested to strongly support Wilson's project to create the League of Nations, to facilitate a visit to Transylvania by American experts and journalists and, last but not least, to have a Transylvanian Romanian appointed as a member of the Romanian delegation. Due to Maniu's intervention, as well as to the acceptance of his proposal by Brătianu, Vaida went to Paris on 9 February 1919. From the very beginning, his relations with the Romanian prime minister were good. This is proved by his memoirs and his correspondence with Maniu. In his turn, Brătianu knew Vaida very well, ever since the turn of the century, and he had benefited from his expertise on Romania's relations with Austria-Hungary. Moreover, he knew that in case a Hungarian delegation had been summoned to Paris, Vaida's role would have become very important. Besides, due to his former relations with the national politicians, now present in Paris as future heads of states, allowed Vaida to play a key role in shaping common positions with regard to the issues debated during the conference. Perhaps of utmost importance for the relations with the Americans was the fact that, in the fall of 1918, he was seen as a supporter of the Wilsonian principles. The chance of taking part in an important international event was not limited to his involvement in the political dialogue. To him, it was a true high-level political school, which left an imprint on his personality and contributed to his subsequent activity as prime minister, minister and member of the Parliament.

Shortly after reaching the capital of France, he shared with Maniu his opinions about the American president, this time from a new position. In several reports sent by Vaida to Maniu, Wilson's personality is described in a positive manner, despite the occasional critical remarks. Even if he was the head of the Romanian delegation, Vaida could not meet with the U.S. president, but he followed attentively his position during the sessions and he intently listened to the opinions of other politicians and experts present in Paris in 1919.

The international recognition of the Romanian legitimate aspirations for self-determination and the U.S. position expressed by President Wilson generally shaped his opinion about the American president, whom he admired, just like the other representatives of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. Shortly after his arrival in Paris, Vaida noticed Wilson's influence during the sessions of

the Supreme Council: "The representatives of the European states refrain from speaking, in order not to upset Wilson."⁷ Besides, he quickly became aware of the U.S. approach: "The Americans see everything from a humanitarian and sentimental perspective." The same subtle observer seemed impressed by the president: "He speaks with much effective power. Nice tone, gentle gestures, an expression that changes according to the presented idea, always preserving the mask of the honest man, all his spiritual remarks fascinate the listeners." He thought Wilson to be an "experienced" and "virtuous" politician, a "fanatic of his generous ideas."⁸ He also praised the American president in his discussions with other important members of the American delegation. Thus, during a meeting with one of Wilson's counselors, Vaida considered him irreplaceable for the peoples in Central and Eastern Europe, who perceived him as "a demigod." At the same time, he also noticed that Wilson's prestige had started to erode. Therefore, he confessed his concern, since he saw in the American president "the illusions and the belief in ideals the multitudes cannot live without"⁹ (04.07.1919). He seemed annoyed by the fact that "he was inaccessible" to the Romanian delegation and also fairly reserved due to Brătianu's resistance on the issue of Banat and of the relations with Hungary. In order to get closer to Wilson, he tried to persuade Brătianu to agree that the University of Bucharest should grant an honorary title to the American president. The prime minister's answer was clear: "First, let's see how he acts with regard to our issue."¹⁰

An important problem noted by Vaida on several occasions was the difficulty of initiating a dialogue with the United States, as well as with the other European powers, on the situation in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. To him, the dismemberment of the Dual Monarchy "was due neither to the discernment, nor to the understanding or the provisions of the Great Ones"; he thus suggested that its breakup was the work of nationalities, as it represented the only real premise that would allow them to make decisions on their future. He thought that most of the delegates at the Peace Conference did not know the complex reality of that moment. He remarked that "they were groping" in "the Austrian maze," while in the Hungarian one "they couldn't even try to find their way, being blinded by the Liberal colors."¹¹ The truth is that former politicians from Austria-Hungary, alongside their colleagues from the states that had existed even before 1914, were members of the Central and Eastern European delegations at the Peace Conference. That was the case of Romania, Serbia and Italy. Those coming from the former empire, like Vaida, had a different political culture, a different experience in the field. They knew the Viennese political environment, the representatives of the Czechs and Slovaks, of the Serbs, etc. This mixture, less visible in Romania's case, generated a different type of discourse, which confused to a certain degree the American delegation, who had to constantly ask for explanations about various problems difficult to understand. On the one hand, there

was suspicion in the case of some Central and Eastern European delegates, precisely due to their political activity prior to 1918, as citizens of an enemy state: Austria-Hungary. On the other hand, an assessment of the American position in Paris should take into account another aspect. The breakup of the monarchy took place at a pace that was difficult to anticipate, creating very complicated problems, difficult to understand by the U.S. government. It was this element that led to the prolongation of the Peace Conference and delayed decisions.

In his letters to Maniu, Vaida repeatedly complained about the frequent changes in the political options of the American delegation. He thought they were caused by the U.S. difficulties in understanding the Central and Eastern European mentality: "It is not hostility to us, but it is the sum of all these insufficiencies that causes confusion, whose victims are the Poles, the Czechoslovaks, the Yugoslavians, the Greeks and ourselves, as well as the Italians and the French."¹² As a matter of fact, in his notes during the Peace Conference, especially those of January and February 1919, when the Czechoslovak, Serbian and Romanian delegations presented their claims, Wilson seemed surprised by their different pleadings, all based on historical arguments. The American President, a promoter of "open diplomacy," repeatedly stated that it was the facts that mattered in decision-making rather than the rhetoric based on the past, on agreements and secret treaties concluded before 1918. He thought that the relations between the Balkan countries freed from Ottoman domination not long before the war were even more complicated. As the other heads of Western European delegations, he was the prisoner of a cliché going about on the continent, according to which the Balkans were a dangerous and unstable area, a source of wars, uprisings and revolutions. An eloquent example from this perspective was the question asked by the British Prime Minister Lloyd George whether the Croats and the Serbs spoke the same language.

Vaida explained that the U.S. position concerning the nationalities in the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was caused by lack of information on the matter. He was only partially right. He was not aware of the expert advice given to Wilson and Lansing by academics from prestigious American universities, which made many commentators of the conference call it "the scientific peace." Ever since 1917, a special commission had been established in Washington, with the purpose of preparing the documentation for the American government. Within the team that provided the necessary information to the U.S. authorities there was a small group led by Professor Charles Seymour and by Clive Day of Yale University, who was in charge of the Romanian issue. Among the works used by this team were the books of Emmanuel de Martonne, *La Transylvanie*, and of William Howell Reed, *The Romanian People*, etc. Surprising was the presence among these books of the famous "Response" of Aurel C.

Popovici, published in 1892 and which had caused a big political scandal in Hungary, having as a result the author's sentencing to four years in prison.¹³ Of course, Clive Day and Charles Seymour followed the political and military events that occurred in Romania and in Transylvania in 1918. During the conference, they supported the Romanians' aspirations, contributing to the U.S. delegation's decisions concerning the setting of Romania's borders with Hungary and Serbia. The creation of the Territorial Commission for Romania, where the U.S. was represented by Allen Dulles, caused an "outburst" of publications, press campaigns, books and brochures, missions sent to our country, a rich and valuable literature printed both in French and in English. The Romanians' lobby in important daily newspapers of the time in Paris, London, Geneva and the U.S. also had a significant contribution. Faced with a deluge of information, hard to assimilate due to the time pressure, the Americans decided, following Wilson's instructions, to collaborate with the British experts, who had a deeper understanding of Central and Eastern European issues. In this context, we cannot ignore Vaida's discussions with Allen Dulles, due to the position of the former as American ambassador to Switzerland.

Vaida talked on several occasions to the U.S. representative in the Territorial Commission for Romania. Initially, the discussions focused on the border with Serbia, which also had a bearing on the Romanian-American relations. During his talks with Dulles, Vaida expressed his discontent regarding the attitude of the American mission to Banat, who "did not study the documents sent by the Romanian delegation" and did not listen to the views of the Romanians in that province.¹⁴ He pointed out the way the Great Powers had solved the Romanian-Serbian litigation, which, in his opinion, "excluded the possibility of a peace between us and the Yugoslavs." Dulles answered him that "time would make us comfortable with it and help us reach an agreement."¹⁵ In exchange, Vaida asked for the United States to act as a mediator between the two countries. At that time, Serbia was claiming the entire region of Banat.

In a tense moment of the Romanian-American relations, Vaida decided to write to the American president,¹⁶ seeking to revive the dialogue between the two countries: "Since they learned the high principles you stated in the Fourteen Points, the Romanian people of Transylvania have worshipped your eminent personality as the prophet of the days to come." Vaida explained that the Program launched on 1 December 1918 in Alba Iulia was based on these principles. He also attached to his letter the Declaration he presented in the Hungarian Parliament on 18 October 1918. It was not by chance that he included the two documents, at a time when the issue of the national and confessional minorities was being discussed more and more in Paris.

THE RELATIONS with Hungary was another issue that required Vaida's longer involvement, as a member of the Romanian delegation in Paris and then as prime minister.

Brătianu's firm position not to include in the treaties with Austria and Hungary some articles concerning the protection of minorities worsened the disputes with the representatives of the Great Powers. After his meeting with Queen Mary in March 1919, the U.S. president tried to persuade the Romanian prime minister that it was not their intention to interfere in Romania's internal affairs. Moreover, in an official letter sent to the head of the Romanian delegation, Wilson stated that national minorities inhabited the territories of the successor states, which led to a decision to include provisions guaranteeing their rights in the respective texts. This was the only condition that would have entitled the Great Powers to offer protection to the new states; otherwise, a policy against minorities was going to make relations between them unstable: "He cannot go back home and inform the American people that the peace treaties were not permanent because the Allied states had refused to accept the treaties."¹⁷ Moreover, the president was clearly asserting that the U.S. would no longer send troops to Europe to enforce the implementation of the agreements. Wilson brought to the attention of the Romanian delegation the fact that any state that would try to make territorial revisions after the conclusion of the Peace Conference would automatically place itself in a position described as "dangerous." In his answer, Brătianu once again refused the U.S. proposal, complaining about the discriminatory treatment to which Romania was subjected.

In this context, being aware of the Americans' sensitivity to this issue, Vaida proposed to Maniu and to other Romanian politicians that the Bucharest Parliament should start discussing a status of the national minorities based on the Resolution of the Great National Assembly gathered in Alba Iulia on 1 December 1918: religious autonomy, the minorities' right to have their own elementary schools financially supported by the Romanian state, financial support given to the denominations, the right to use the mother tongue in lower courts, confessionnal schools etc. It was a project which, in his opinion, would have put an end to the Americans' suspicions and would present them with strong facts, difficult to challenge. He knew very well that the politicians in the U.S. delegation trusted this kind of concrete solutions. Discussed in Paris and then in London, his proposals were well received, contributing to his acceptance as a partner in dialogue both by the representatives of the Washington administration and of other governments. Polk accepted the removal of two articles from the respective treaties. This did not mean that Vaida was less intransigent on other issues he would face as the head of the Romanian delegation to the Peace Conference. His opinions concerning the status of minorities and religious denominations stemmed from a truth acknowl-

edged by the Transylvanian Romanian political leaders: “We are not allowed to do any injustice, but we must avoid committing suicide by granting privileges.”¹⁸ His considerations regarding these issues bore the imprint of the American position at the Conference in Paris and then in London, which he had accepted.

The Romanian military intervention in Hungary, led at that time by a Bolshevik government headed by Béla Kun, and the occupation of Budapest by the Romanian army constituted a major event that affected Romanian-American relations. Both Wilson and other members of the American delegation thought that the Romanian offensive was the main cause behind the support given to the Kun government even by the Hungarian conservative forces. Kun’s communism had turned into a patriotic message to Hungary. The American opinion was not shared by France and Italy, which supported the Romanian intervention. Vaida embraced Brătianu’s position and repeatedly justified the decision to occupy Budapest and overthrow Béla Kun. Moreover, both Wilson and Lloyd George were certain that the Romanian intervention was nothing more than an attempt to seize more territory from Hungary. Romanian-American relations became so tense that an Anglo-American proposal was made to exclude Romania from the Peace Conference. In exchange, France and Italy, wary of the Anglo-American accusations, proposed another hearing of Brătianu by the four Great Powers. On this occasion, Wilson adopted a balanced position and confined his remarks to his discontent with the advance of the Romanian troops. He accused Brătianu that his position had endangered “the equitable division of the Habsburg Monarchy.”¹⁹ The prime minister once again mentioned the misinformation which had caused the unprecedented diplomatic pressure exerted by the four powers. He expressed his dissatisfaction regarding the way Romania was treated. Both Brătianu and Vaida were surprised by the Anglo-American position, which they simply did not understand. With regard to this extremely serious issue, Vaida struggled to persuade the U.S. delegation of the real purpose of the Romanian intervention, the necessity of overthrowing the Kun government and the danger to which Romania was exposed due to the events in Soviet Russia. In his discussions with Allen Dulles, Herbert Hoover and other American experts, Vaida suggested that it was necessary to send to Transylvania expert teams in order to learn first hand the reasons of the intervention.

The occupation of Budapest and the installation of a new government led by Joseph of Habsburg created a tense relation between the two countries. The rumors, the articles published in the international press, including the American one, the discussions behind the scenes of the conference, etc., also had their contribution. They spoke about “the restoration of the Habsburgs,” about Romania’s intentions to install a king belonging to the Romanian ruling family, and finally there was the accusation in an article published in the *Chicago Tribune*

concerning “a separate treaty concluded between Romania and Hungary.” There was also a rumor about the possibility that the Romanian occupation might become permanent.

How the U.S. delegation, among others, perceived the political situation in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and how the two states, Austria and Hungary, were treated, were extremely important things for Vaida. This is what he confessed to Maniu²⁰: “They still see in Hungary and in Austria the former monarchy, with its whole power and prestige.” Starting from this premise, based on real facts, Vaida, together with the other members of the Romanian delegation, tried to prevent the restoration attempts, including the suggested confederation. The latter was considered by Romania a restoration project, aimed at bringing back the former empire. In fact, even since the end of March 1919, he expressed his concern with such a possibility: “Everything seems to confirm the news of the Habsburgs’ return to Vienna and Budapest.”²¹ In August, as rumors on this matter grew stronger, Vaida began to fear that Britain and the U.S. considered a reconfiguration of the former empire, a sort of “customs communism” or an “ersatz” state acting as a barrier against Germany and Soviet Russia. The discussions with the American representatives quickly persuaded him that those were only rumors without any real support.

Still, his main problem was the designation of the Archduke Joseph of Habsburg as prime minister of Hungary. Besides the concern aroused by this appointment, this time there was also a suspicion regarding the possible involvement of Romania, by means of the Romanian army. Nobody took into account a notorious element in the archduke’s biography, which could only engender the hostility of the Romanian generals, namely, that he had been commander-in-chief of the German-Austrian-Hungarian troops at Mărășești and in other battles fought during the war. Faced with this situation, as well as with the Romanian occupation of Budapest, Vaida managed to create a feeling of solidarity among the delegations of the former nationalities in the empire, especially the Czechoslovaks and the Yugoslavs, in order to collectively and convincingly react to the events in Budapest. Furthermore, Vaida had personal reasons to get involved in this campaign, given his political background, well known in Paris, and his relations with Archduke Francis Ferdinand’s entourage. The campaign launched against Joseph of Habsburg managed to deny the rumors meant to contribute to an unfavorable perception of Romania. His firm position, expressed in his discussions with Allen Dulles and Hoover, the adoption of the slogan “Pas des Habsbourgs,” as he liked to say, had a positive and effective result. The fact that the U.S. and the other Great Powers did not recognize Joseph of Habsburg and his government made Vaida confess to Maniu: “I think this is perhaps my most important achievement in Paris.”²² Two weeks after his appointment as prime minis-

ter, the archduke resigned. The Great Powers acknowledged the option clearly expressed by the Romanian delegation through the voice of Vaida, hostile to any kind of restoration.

After Brătianu's departure in June 1919, followed by his resignation, the Romanian delegation faced more complicated problems and Vaida's role became even more important. He was seen by the other delegations, including the American one, as "Brătianu's man." The prospect of his appointment as prime minister was not received with much enthusiasm, although he showed flexibility in approaching the Romanian issues, during the autumn of 1919. On 1 and 2 December 1919 he had a very important meeting with the ambassadors of the Great Powers, where he proved to be more convincing. He did not show Brătianu's intransigence, which he had positively appreciated in the past,²³ seeing it as an excellent premise for the international recognition of Bessarabia's union with Romania. His appointment as prime minister, on 5 December 1919, radically changed his status at the Peace Conference. He transferred his endeavors to London, where he was very well received, especially by the British mass media. Unfortunately, both Wilson and Lansing had left Europe, so his relations with the Americans were limited to the members of the U.S. delegation. They supported Vaida's effort to gain international recognition for the union of Bessarabia with Romania, which was probably his greatest success as prime minister. Vaida himself confessed the difficulty of his mission to Maniu, at the end of October 1919: "Since I was the only delegate and therefore 'president' of the Romanian delegation, the heads of various state institutions—civil servants—came and shared all their problems with me. I also had to write all the Conference notes." The confusion at home complicated his efforts in Paris: "I neither complain about working, nor do I fear accountability, but I would like to know in what direction our foreign policy is heading."²⁴ We should not overlook his constant support to the U.S. emigrants from Transylvania, who were returning home without travel documents. They had left as Austro-Hungarian citizens and they were coming back as citizens of Greater Romania. Hence, confusions and problems, which he managed to solve. In May 1920, Rattigan reported to Lord Curzon about the political situation in Romania and presented his views on some officials in Bucharest. His opinion about Vaida-Voevod, whom he had met in 1919 and then in London in 1920, is worth mentioning: "On the whole, however, Vaida was a success, especially in his dealings with foreign governments, who were favorably influenced by his candor and sincerity after the experience of the tortuous methods of Brătianu."²⁵

Vaida's relations with the U.S. representatives at the Peace Conference in Paris have a particular significance, although not a spectacular one. What was important was that he managed to confront, for the first time, another way of think-

ing, the American one. Despite his background, he proved to be an experienced politician who could understand the aspirations of his country and adapt to the principles of American democracy.



Notes

1. The historical literature on this issue is quite extensive. We shall mention here only a part of it, closer to the content of this article, which seeks to gain recognition for Vaida's activity: Sherman David Spector, *Romania at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study of the Diplomacy of Ioan I. C. Brătianu* (Iași, 1995); V. V. Tilea, *Acțiunea diplomatică a României* (Sibiu, 1925); C. Botoran, I. Calafeteanu, E. Campus, and V. Moisuc, *România la Conferința de Pace de la Paris (1918–1920): Triumful principiului naționalităților* (Cluj-Napoca, 1983); Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Acțiunea politică și militană a României în 1919 în lumina corespondenței diplomatice a lui Ion I. C. Brătianu* (Bucharest, 1939); Keith Hitchins, "Woodrow Wilson and the Union of Transylvania with Romania, 1917–1918," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 18, 4 (1979): 803–810; Vasile Vesa, "La réception du wilsonisme en Europe Centrale: Le cas de la Transylvanie," in *La fin de la Première Guerre mondiale et la nouvelle architecture géopolitique européenne*, eds. George Cipăianu and Vasile Vesa (Cluj, 2000), 133–140.
2. Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, *Memorii*, vol. 4, ed. Alexandru Șerban (Cluj-Napoca, 2006), 103.
3. *Ibid.*, 4: 105.
4. *Ibid.*, 1: 128.
5. Victor S. Mamatey, *The United States and the East Central Europe 1914–1918: A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda* (Princeton, 1957), 377.
6. V. V. Tilea, *Envoy Extraordinary: Memoirs of a Romanian Diplomat*, ed. Ileana Tilea (London, 1998), 36–37.
7. Central Historical Archives of Bucharest, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod collection, the correspondence with Iuliu Maniu, 04.28.1919.
8. *Ibid.*, letter of 05.15.1919.
9. *Ibid.*, letter of 04.07.1919.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Vaida Voevod, 2: 91.
12. Liviu Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod între Belvedere și Versailles (însemnări, memorii, scrisori)* (Cluj-Napoca, 1993), 257.
13. Hitchins, 807.
14. Central Historical Archives of Bucharest, letter of 06.23.1919.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Horia Salcă and Florin Salvan, *Dr. Alevandru Vaida-Voevod: Corespondență 1918–1919* (Brașov, 2001), 517.
17. Spector, 177.

18. Maior, 263.
19. Spector, 179.
20. Maior, 88.
21. Central Historical Archives of Bucharest, letter of 04.22.1919.
22. Ibid., letter of 07.21.1919.
23. Ibid., letter of 10.25.1919. Vaida highlighted Brătianu's contribution to the success of the Romanian endeavors. "I respect Brătianu, I am devoted and grateful to him for everything that he has done with so much resoluteness and brilliant wisdom towards the accomplishment of national unity."
24. Ibid. In the text of the report, he once again informed Maniu about the U.S. position on the restoration in Hungary: "As for the Magyars, I rest assured that America will never recognize a king in Hungary."
25. I kindly thank Mr. Vasile Pușcaș, who offered me a copy of this document from the archives of the Foreign Office, 371/3569/1919–1920, f. 53. Romania Annual Report.

Abstract

Alexandru Vaida-Voevod in Paris:

His Relations with the U.S. Delegation at the Peace Conference (1919)

The issue of the Romanian-American relations until 1918 and during the Paris Peace Conference has been in the attention of historians, but they focused mostly on Ion I. C. Brătianu and paid less attention to the actions of his successor at the head of the Romanian delegation in Paris, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. The present study discusses the latter's attempts to improve communication with the U.S. delegates and to help clarify the situation and the position of Romania. Vaida's relations with the U.S. representatives at the Peace Conference in Paris have a particular significance, in the sense that he managed to confront, for the first time, another way of thinking, the American one. Despite his background, he proved to be an experienced politician who could understand the aspirations of his country and adapt to the principles of American democracy.

Keywords

Romanian-American relations, World War I, Paris Peace Conference, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, Woodrow Wilson, self-determination