

Savel Rădulescu – Member of the Titulescu Team and Expert in the Optants Question¹

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Abstract: The diplomat Savel Rădulescu (1895 – 1970) is regarded as one of Romania's financial experts during the Interwar Period and between 1944 and 1945. His present-day visibility can be attributed to his distinguished career, which included serving as Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1932 – 1936), having been a close associate of Nicolae Titulescu, and his criticism of the Soviet Union's abuses in Romania after 23 August 1944. The first objective of this research is to provide a concise biography of Savel Rădulescu, including his family background, education, professional career, skills, expertise, connections with friends and those in power, etc. Numerous archival documents contain crucial and diverse information about Rădulescu. The second and main focus of the research will be to present and analyse his role in the Romanian-Hungarian dispute over the Optants Question, closely examining his responsibilities and how he carried them out. As the author of a doctoral thesis on Romania's financial policies between 1914 and 1922, S. Rădulescu had already gained the trust of Vintilă Brătianu and Nicolae Titulescu by 1925. Rădulescu's significant contribution as a financial advisor to the Romanian Legation in London (1925 – 1928) in the matter of the optants was decisive in his employment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October 1928, where he served as a financial and economic advisor and director of the Economic Division. Savel Rădulescu's appointments to Titulescu's team in London or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not by chance and were due in particular to exceptional skills and abilities.

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Keywords: Savel Rădulescu, Hungarian Optants Question, Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Titulescu

Rezumat: Savel Rădulescu (1895-1970) este considerat ca fiind unul dintre cei mai apreciați experți financiari ai statului român, atât în perioada interbelică, cât și între 1944 și 1945. Vizibilitatea sa în prezent este favorizată de parcursul profesional excepțional până la demnitatea de subsecretar de stat în Ministerul Afacerilor Străine (1932-1936), de colaborarea strânsă cu Nicolae Titulescu sau pentru că după 23 august 1944 a fost un critic al abuzurilor Uniunii Sovietice în România. Prima direcție de cercetare a acestui studiu are în vedere realizarea unei scurte biografii: familie, educație, parcurs profesional, aptitudini, competențe, inserție în rețele de putere etc. Menționez că există numeroase documente de arhivă, unele încă inedite, care conțin informații esențiale și diverse despre această personalitate. A doua direcție de cercetare, de altfel și cea principală, își propune prezentarea și analiza rolului lui Savel Rădulescu în diferendul româno-maghiar în chestiunea optanților. Voi urmări îndeaproape sarcinile care i-au fost trasate și gradul de îndeplinire al acestora. Autor al unei teze de doctorat susținute în Franța despre politicile financiare ale României între 1914 și 1922, S. Rădulescu se bucura deja în 1925 de încrederea lui Vintilă Brătianu și a lui Nicolae Titulescu. Cooptarea sa ca expert în echipa angrenată în chestiunea optanților, inițial în calitate de consilier financiar la Legația României din Londra (1925-1928), a fost determinantă în angajarea în Ministerul Afacerilor Străine (octombrie 1928), cu gradul de consilier financiar și economic, îndeplinind funcția de director al Diviziunii Economice. Acest parcurs profesional nu au fost întâmplător și se datorează în special unor competențe și abilități excepționale.

Cuvinte cheie: Savel Rădulescu, problema optanților maghiari, Ministerul Român al Afacerilor Străine, Nicolae Titulescu

Savel Rădulescu is one of Greater Romania's most well-known diplomats in the post-1989 world. This is due to his close collaboration with Nicolae Titulescu, having been his Undersecretary of State during his mandate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a victim of the Communist regime and to the attention he has received from historians, primarily in the works of Horia Dumitrescu.²

² Horia Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu* (Focșani: Editura Pallas, 2003). This work is the result of a PhD thesis. Of note are two other studies by the same author: "Vasile

From our point of view, Savel Rădulescu's life is representative of the elite of Interwar Romania's diplomatic corps. Despite the fact that he was not the scion of an old boyar family, like most diplomats trained before 1918, young Rădulescu enjoyed an excellent educational background and benefited, at least in the first years of his career, from the fact that his father, Ioan Rădulescu, had a friendship network in the Putna County and within the National Liberal Party (from now: NLP). Like other diplomats who held high-ranking positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1919 to 1948,³ he began his career in other institutions and with different responsibilities. His rise was mainly connected to his collaborative relationship with Nicolae Titulescu.

His most important rank was that of Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the ministership of Titulescu, from 20 October 1932 to 28 August 1936. How do we explain the fact that he was appointed and held this position for nearly four years? Other than his excellent relationship with N. Titulescu and his loyalty towards him, what were the human and professional qualities that furthered an apparently explosive career in diplomacy? How much did the support he received from his family's friends and the local Putna County powerbrokers count for young Rădulescu's entrance into the networks of power? Given that he was not a supporter of King Carol II's or Antonescu's authoritarian regimes, could he have avoided incarceration in the Communist prisons had he not been appointed Chairman of the Romanian Commission for the Application of the Armistice in the autumn of 1944? We will attempt to answer these questions. However, our primary objective is to determine the decisive moments and factors in Savel Rădulescu's professional rise.

Our hypothesis is that his entrance into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, his circle of friends (Romanians and foreigners), subordinates and constant protectors are owed to his involvement in the Romanian-Hungarian dispute regarding the Optants Question (1922 – 1930). The need for capable economic and financial experts willing to put in hard physical and mental work contributed to his recruitment to the Titulescu team. Thus, he entered a prestigious and influential informal network which dominated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for almost two decades. Of course, the recommendations he received from certain politicians (I.G. Duca, Vintilă Brătianu, Constantin Argetoianu, and General Averescu), as well as Rădulescu's ability to ingratiate himself were equally important aspects.

Țiroiu și Savel Rădulescu. Corespondență", *Cronica Vrancei*, III (2002): 305-315 and "Nicolae Iorga și Savel Rădulescu. Corespondență", *Cronica Vrancei*, VIII (2008): 195-201.

³ Nicolae Titulescu, Mihai Ispasiu, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, Constantin Antoniadă.

Unlike other Romanian diplomats, his life story benefits from an extensive array of primary sources and a well-researched biography by Horia Dumitrescu. Information about our subject and his family can be found in the press, in memoirs,⁴ in letters,⁵ and in several archival collections, inventoried and researched by Horia Dumitrescu. Dumitrescu also studied the Military Archives, the Archives of Vrancea County, the National Archives – particularly the personal Savel Rădulescu fond⁶ within the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (from now: DAMFA) and within the Archive of the National Council for the Studying of the Securitate's Archives (shortened to ANCSSA). We have completed the data and the information in Dumitrescu's work *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu* by thoroughly researching the *Problema 11* fond in the DAMFA, where there is information on the Optants Question, Rădulescu's personal file and by painstakingly going through Rădulescu's two files at the ANCSSA.⁷

Ioan P. Rădulescu-Putna and his sons

Savel Rădulescu was born on 19 October 1895, in Focșani, the son of Ioan P. Rădulescu, 23 years old, and of Ecaterina, 17 years old.⁸ We do not know much about his mother; however, his father was a notable presence in early 20th-century Putna County. He added the word "Putna" to his surname, a common practice given that other people with the same name were present in the public space and in the education system,⁹ mainly Ioan P. Rădulescu-Râmnic, a politician and French language teacher at the *Unirea* High School of Focșani. This added family name was not simply an attempt to distinguish oneself but also identified him with the community he wanted to represent.

⁴ Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii. Pentru cei de Mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri*, vol. IX, part VIII (1930 – 1931), edition and index by Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Machiavelli, 1997); Ioan Hudiță, *Jurnal politic, 16 septembrie 1938 – 30 aprilie 1939*, [vol. 2], introduction and notes by academician Dan Berindei (București: Editura Fundației Pro, 2003); Ioan Hudiță, *Jurnal politic (13 mai – 18 august 1947)*, vol. XX, introductory study and notes by academician Dan Berindei (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2015).

⁵ George G. Potra, *Nicolae Titulescu. Corespondență*, vol. I (1921-1931), part II (Bucharest: Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2004).

⁶ After studying the inventory of the personal fond and the text and notes of *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, we have decided to use Horia Dumitrescu's work without necessarily studying the files in Rădulescu's personal found, kept at the National Historical Archives (from now: NHA).

⁷ Archive of the National Council for the Studying of the Securitate's Archives (from now: ANCSSA) ANCSSA, files no. I 3642 and P 6615.

⁸ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 7.

⁹ For example: Professor Ioan Rădulescu-Pogoneanu or Ioan Rădulescu, a priest and teacher in Focșani.

The career of Ioan P. Rădulescu-Putna (1872 – 1934), reconstituted from various archive collections and the press, portrays an ambitious individual who attempted to climb the social ladder both for himself and for his family, as seen by the way he titled himself: “teacher and lawyer”. As a matter of fact, when Savel, his first child, was born, Ioan P. Rădulescu insisted on having the mayor of Focșani, Dimitrie Tzanu, as a witness to the baptism.¹⁰ We are unsure whether Ioan P. Rădulescu was born in Focșani, although he did finish his primary schooling at the Boys’ Primary School No. 2, where his children also studied.¹¹

Horia Dumitrescu notes that the young Rădulescu household was doing well financially, allowing them to travel to Paris every summer between 1896 and 1899. We believe that he obtained his diploma in Paris (in Law), which would also be the reason why the Rădulescu family spent three summers there. He did not have a bachelor’s degree in Letters or Foreign Languages. However, the fact that he had received a degree in France allowed him to teach French. We also have no precise data regarding Ioan P. Rădulescu-Putna’s teaching career, especially for the 1904 – 1907 timeframe, as he can be misidentified with Ioan P. Rădulescu-Râmnic.

In the autumn of 1907, during the tenure of a Liberal government, Savel Rădulescu’s father transferred from the Piatra Neamț High School to the Focșani one,¹² teaching French and Law.¹³ In 1908, he was the President of the Commercial Workers’ Society of Focșani, which could mean that he was also active in commerce in addition to his work as a lawyer and a teacher. In the same year, during the tenure of a Liberal government, he was appointed inspector for secondary schools, which makes little sense given his short term as a teacher and can only be explained as a political decision.

Ioan Rădulescu pursued a public post to bring him visibility and prestige and garner political power. On 14/27 June 1910, I.P. Rădulescu, “licensed in Law, former school inspector”, was appointed prefect through a Royal Decree under the recommendation of Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Ion I.C. Brătianu, not for his home county however, but in another corner of the country, the Romanați County.¹⁴

¹⁰ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 7-8.

¹¹ Th. Gh. Rădvan, *Istoricul Școlii Primare de Băieți no. 2 din Focșani* (Focșani: s.n., 1931), 113, cited in Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 8.

¹² *Universul*, XXV, no. 26 (23 September 1907): 1.

¹³ We were unable to find his name in the *Anuarul persoanelor cari au obținut titluri universitare în țară în timpul celor 40 de ani de domnie ai Majestății sale Regelui Carol I, 1866 – 1906* (Bucharest: s.n., 1906), only that of the other teacher Ioan P. Rădulescu, who graduated from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Iași in 1904, 215.

¹⁴ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 57 (15 June 1910): 2457.

On 27 November / 10 December 1910, he was transferred as Prefect of the Putna County.¹⁵ The Rădulescu family's joy was short-lived. Since the Brătianu government resigned on 28 December 1910/ 10 January 1911, and, as was expected at that time, the county prefects resigned as well.¹⁶

Owing to the posts he held, Ioan P. Rădulescu, 40 years old, became a leading member of the Liberal Club of Focșani. His term as MP won for the 3rd college during the November 1912 elections, when the NLP was in the opposition, which lasted until 1914, was a significant acknowledgment. We could not accurately identify the moment when Ioan P. Rădulescu split from the Liberals. It likely occurred before 1917, when he tried creating the Labor Party in Iași.¹⁷ We believe that he kept close ties with various Liberal leaders, and the split from the NLP was caused probably by local tensions.

During the May 1920 elections, Ioan P. Rădulescu ran in the Putna County for the governing People's Party alongside Duiliu Zamfirescu – then Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸ Moving to the People's Party was a winning bet: he came in second in voter count (after D. Zamfirescu), and the Party won three out of four seats. In his memoirs, Constantin Argetoianu mentions that I.P. Rădulescu became the leader of the People's Party Putna organization and stayed loyal.¹⁹ He remained an MP until Parliament was dissolved in January 1922. History repeated itself when Rădulescu won another term as MP between 1926 and 1927, still running for the governing People's Party. The move from the NLP to the People's Party could only boost Rădulescu Sr. and his family's connections, as he became close to General Averescu, Constantin Argetoianu and Duiliu Zamfirescu. Among others, long before January 1923, I.P. Rădulescu also met Nicolae Titulescu.²⁰ I.P. Rădulescu died on 27 November 1934, and his wife, Ecaterina, died in 1960.²¹

Savel Rădulescu had two other brothers. Ioan (Jean) Rădulescu was born on 15 December 1896 and died in February 1940. Nicolae (Nicușor) Rădulescu was born on 14 August 1901. All three graduated from the *Unirea* High School of Focșani. Savel and Ioan had a similar education,

¹⁵ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 195 (1/14 December 1910): 7937.

¹⁶ Andrei Florin Sora, *Servir l'État roumain. Le corps préfectoral, 1866-1940* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2011), 310-311.

¹⁷ Argetoianu, *Memorii. Pentru cei de Mâine*, vol. IX, 216.

¹⁸ Ramona Miron, "Alegerile parlamentare din anul 1920 în județul Putna", *Cronica Vrancei*, XVI (2013): 94-95.

¹⁹ Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii*, vol. V, part V (1918), Stelian Neagoe (ed.) (Bucharest: Machiavelli, 1995), 75.

²⁰ In a letter to Savel Rădulescu, dated 10 January 1923, N. Titulescu mentions that he had recommended his father as a lawyer for Charlotte de Wertheimstein: Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 14.

²¹ ANCSSA, file no. I 3642, 65.

separated by a year: early education in Focșani, a bachelor's degree in Law after the First World War at the University of Bucharest, a PhD in Law in Paris, though with different specializations (Economic and Financial Sciences, and Criminal Law, respectively). The university year was frozen when Romania entered World War I, and they fought on the front. According to H. Dumitrescu, Savel and Ioan arrived in Paris in November 1920,²² where they enrolled in the Faculty of Law to obtain their PhDs.

Ioan (Jean) Rădulescu obtained his PhD in 1923, like his brother, with the thesis *De l'influence de l'erreur sur la responsabilité pénale*. During his time in Paris, Ioan worked for Joseph Paul-Boncour's law firm – a politician, future Prime Minister (December 1932 – January 1933)²³ and, among others, France's delegate to the League of Nations (from now: LoN) between 1932 and 1936 and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1932 – 1934, 1938). Despite this, Ioan chose to return to his home country and was employed as a full-time reviewer for the Legislative Council from 1 January 1926, under I.I.C. Brătianu's Liberal government. He continued ascending: in 1936, he became a permanent advisor for the 1st Section of the Legislative Council. Since the mid-1920s, Jean Rădulescu became a renowned specialist in criminology and comparative criminal law and pursued a university career. In 1926, he was appointed aggregate professor at the University of Cernăuți. Four years later, he became a tenured professor. In 1936, he succeeded in transferring to the University of Iași, where he taught until 1939, when he had to retire due to health issues. He died in February 1940, an event extensively covered in the press, especially in Iași.²⁴ Ioan Rădulescu was close friend with Traian Ionașcu and Vespasian Pella, the latter also being close to his brother Savel (both had responsibilities during the Optants Question).

Nicolae studied at the Faculty of Medicine and later became a neurologist at the Saint Pantelimon Hospital of Bucharest. Under the communist regime, he was a physician at the Dispensary No. 1 TBC of Bucharest.²⁵ He was Savel's main financial supporter after 1948. In September 1970, Nicolae Rădulescu was still alive and married.²⁶

²² Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 12.

²³ About this French personality, see the recent book of Matthieu Boisdrion, *Joseph Paul-Boncour (1873-1972)* (Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2023).

²⁴ "Înmormântarea profesorului Jean Rădulescu," *Universul*, LVII, no. 41 (12 February 1940): 6; "Moartea profesorului Jean Rădulescu dela Facultatea de Drept," *Opinia*, XXXVII, no. 9864 (9 February 1940): 2; "Comemorarea prof. Jean Rădulescu. Solemnitatea dela Facultatea de Drept," *Opinia*, XXXVII, no. 9871 (17 February 1940): 2.

²⁵ ANCSSA, file no. I 3642, 24.

²⁶ We find this information in the *Deaths* newspaper column, the Rădulescu spouses thanking those who were there with them for the "loss" of Savel Rădulescu, *România Liberă*, XXVIII, no. 8051 (11 September 1970): 4.

Savel Rădulescu: education, participation in the Great War, diplomatic career, member of the *Titulescu network*

Savel Rădulescu was initially drawn to the Army, though probably not a military career, but as a space for the physical and intellectual development of an active-duty or reserve officer, which garnered several qualities and a certain societal prestige. As such, although the Second Balkan War had ended, Savel enrolled as a volunteer soldier from 1 October 1913, in the 1st Artillery Regiment “Cetate”.²⁷ He could not do so earlier since he only reached the minimum age for enrolling as a volunteer (18 years) in October 1913. In addition, after completing the Baccalaureate exam (the autumn session), he did a reduced military service at the Reserve Officers School. He was promoted in January 1915 to the rank of Sub-Lieutenant.²⁸ In October 1914, he enrolled in the Faculty of Science of the University of Bucharest, the Mathematics section, which he did not finish, and one year later, in the Faculty of Law of the same institute.²⁹ As such, Law was not his first choice. Certainly, his knowledge of Mathematics helped him become a financial specialist.

While a second-year student of Law, Rădulescu, the reserve artillery officer, was mobilized on 15/28 August 1916. In November 1916, he was attached to the Heavy Artillery Command alongside the French Lieutenant-General Joseph Grollemund, which shows that he understood the French language well. In January 1917, he was moved to the Heavy Artillery Command of the 1st Army.³⁰ Promoted to full Lieutenant in March 1917,³¹ he fought on the front lines and, for a time, within an artillery battery commanded by his future colleague in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Constantin Teodorescu-Horezeanu (General Consul and Director of the Interpreter Service).³² He was discharged in May 1918 under the rank of Lieutenant in reserve, and in 1931, he was listed in Army documents as a Major in reserve. He won several awards during the Great War: the *Commemorative Cross, Carpathians and Mărășești cordons*, Knight in the *Order of the Crown with Spades*, *Croix de Guerre avec Palme* (a French award). We do not know if he was injured during the war, though he was infected with epidemic typhus.³³

²⁷ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁹ ANCSSA, P 6615, 12 r.

³⁰ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³² *Adevărul*, L, no. 16197 (13 November 1936): 6.

³³ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 12.

The war hero resumed his law studies in 1918 and obtained his bachelor's degree in 1919. The family strategically decided to send the two Rădulescu brothers to Paris for their PhD in Law, even if it required spending seemingly more than the parents' financial possibilities.³⁴ Their networking had to be supplemented with prestigious diplomas, given that the competition for administrative and university jobs had become fierce. Savel Rădulescu met Nicolae Titulescu at one of its conferences,³⁵ most likely in Paris.

Savel, like Jean, also worked during his PhD studies. We know that he worked within the Romanian Legation³⁶ from early 1923.³⁷ Most likely, he was a *supernumerary* – and unpaid – or even a non-official functionary, as this employment is not mentioned in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs status of service.³⁸ If he performed work, even without being paid, in a Romanian legation, he had to prove several intellectual, professional and communication qualities, which would have depended on trust, as well as on the recommendations of influential individuals (politicians, university professors, etc.). We believe that his father's old Liberal and People's Party relations weighed heavily, as well as the ones the young Rădulescu made for himself in Paris, especially Nicolae Titulescu. Savel Rădulescu defended his PhD thesis, titled *La politique financière de la Roumanie depuis 1914 (vol. I: 1914 – 1918; vol. II: 1918 – 1922)*, 699 pages long, and received his degree in May 1923.³⁹ The fact that he obtained his PhD title and published his work definitely benefited the Romanian state.

Savel was not hired for a permanent position at Romania's Paris legation, but he did have several responsibilities that implied representing Romania to the world. He started being selected for different work teams, the most notable one at the time being the Romanian delegation led by Nicolae Titulescu, which participated at the London Conference from 16 July to 30 August 1924, where the adoption of the Dawes Plan was discussed.⁴⁰

³⁴ Ibid., 13.

³⁵ Savel Rădulescu, "Portret", in *In Memoriam. Nicolae Titulescu*, introductory study, selections, translations by Ion Grecescu (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1982), 223.

³⁶ Sorin Popescu, Tudor Prelipceanu, "Savel Ioan Rădulescu. Jurist și diplomat de înaltă clasă", in *Buletin de informare legislativă*, Consiliul Legislativ, no. 3 (2014): 46.

³⁷ We know this from a letter written to his father, dated 4 January 1923, where he explained why he was not returning to his home country. Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 13.

³⁸ *Stat de serviciu*, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 34 v.

³⁹ <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb311708230> (accessed on 25 August 2023)

⁴⁰ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 16.

While returning for brief periods to Romania, the future diplomat was employed as a clerk sometime between 1924 and 1925 at the Blank Bank “research office”.⁴¹ C. Argetoianu bragged that he was the one who had recommended Savel to Aristide Blank, following I.P. Rădulescu’s insinuations.⁴² Also, due to his father’s suggestions and pressure, Savel was open to a university career in Cernăuți or Iași. As such, he enrolled in the contest for Aggregate Professor of Public Finances at the Faculty of Law of the University of Iași, though he never participated.⁴³ Still, ever since he had been working on his PhD thesis in Paris, Savel has decided to pursue a career in diplomacy, allowing him to spend as much time abroad as possible.

Being noted by Nicolae Titulescu and other Romanian diplomats working in Western Capitals, his PhD thesis and Savel Rădulescu himself were noticed by Vintilă Brătianu, Minister of Finances in his brother’s, Ionel I.C. Brătianu, cabinet. In a letter dated 21 December 1924, addressed to N. Titulescu, who was then plenipotentiary minister to London and Romania’s permanent delegate to the LoN, Vintilă Brătianu details his team members, who he would take to negotiate with the Great Powers on treaties, reparations and war debts:

“... When I go to Paris, I will bring more companions than a Minister of Finance would wish for. However, since so many things lie in suspense and not many of them are resolved (and not always due to the Ministry of Finance, but even due to the other states or international institutions), I must also take... Given that Mr. V[ictor] Bădulescu is in Cernăuți and cannot come, I have replaced him with a young PhD graduate of Law, a student of the Political Sciences School of Paris, who defended his thesis one year ago, Mr. Savel Rădulescu. ...”⁴⁴

This text hints that the Minister of Finance was unaware of the close ties between Titulescu and Savel Rădulescu. The Paris Allied

⁴¹ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 13 r.

⁴² Argetoianu, *Memorii. Pentru cei de Mâine*, vol. IX, 216.

⁴³ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 15-16.

⁴⁴ “... Voi lua cu mine la Paris mai mulți însoțitori decât un min. de Finanțe ar fi dorit. Dar cum sunt atâtea chestii în suspensie și cum nu prea sunt toate deslușite (și nu totdeauna din pricina min. de Finanțe, dar chiar și a celorlalte state sau instituții internaționale) trebuie să iau și pe Apoi cum d. V[ictor] Bădulescu este la Cernăuți și nu poate veni, l-am înlocuit cu un tânăr doctor în drept, elev al Șc. de Șt. Politice de la Paris, acum un an ieșit din școală și cu teza reținută, d. Savel Rădulescu.”, Potra, *Nicolae Titulescu. Corespondență*, vol. I (1921-1931), part II, doc. no. 69, 598.

Finance Minister Peace Conference, the topic of the letter, took place between 7 and 14 January 1925 and covered the Ruhr Question and Romania and Greece's rights regarding war reparations.⁴⁵ V. Brătianu, N. Titulescu and S. Rădulescu were members of Romania's delegation. In the press, Savel Rădulescu is named a financial counsellor of the Ministry of Finances.⁴⁶

The status of service holds no information regarding Savel Rădulescu's public posts and missions before 1 January 1926. Still, according to Mihai Iacobescu, in 1925, Rădulescu was a paid employee of Romania at Geneva (alongside George Oprescu,⁴⁷ D. Iancovici and D. Negulescu).⁴⁸ In September and October 1925, Savel Rădulescu was an official emissary at Geneva alongside N. Titulescu and V. Brătianu. He was also a member of Romania's delegation, led by N. Titulescu, who travelled between October 1925 and January 1926 (this would include visiting certain North American cities), mainly regarding the settlement of Romania's debts to the U.S.A. Savel Rădulescu is mentioned alongside V. Bădulescu as an economist of the Ministry of Finance,⁴⁹ but a different newspaper mentions S. Rădulescu as a lawyer, part of Romania's delegation.⁵⁰

At least during 1923 – 1925, Savel Rădulescu was paid as a contract employee (*diurnist*) by the Ministry of Finances and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to financial benefits, he received daily pay for his frequent travels abroad (the United States mission, including the journey itself, lasted for over three months). However, the most important benefits he accrued were his experience, the trust of N. Titulescu and V. Brătianu and his entrance into diplomatic circles and networks. During 1922 – 1930, which coincides with the Optants Question, S. Rădulescu formed close bonds, including friendships, with other members of the Titulescu team: George Oprescu, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, Mihai Ispasiu, Dimitrie Ciotori, Grigore Gafencu.

While he was in the United States, towards the end of 1925, Savel Rădulescu's employment prospects back home for a position that would satisfy his father's ambitions looked increasingly inevitable. As such, from 1 January 1926, alongside his brother Ioan, Savel would come to

⁴⁵ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 19.

⁴⁶ *Neamul Românesc*, XX, no. 2 (3 January 1925): 4.

⁴⁷ According to the Securitate's informants, Oprescu and Rădulescu remained close between 1950 – 1960. ANCSSA, file no. I 3642, 56.

⁴⁸ Mihai Iacobescu, *România și Societatea Națiunilor, 1919-1929* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1988), 131.

⁴⁹ *Argus*, XVI, no. 3725 (20 September 1925): 5.

⁵⁰ *Universul*, XLIII, no. 217 (20 September 1925): 5.

work in the Legislative Council (created in February 1925), specifically in the 3rd Section as a full-time reviewer. When they mentioned his name in regard to personnel movements within the Legislative Council, the newspapers noted him as a Doctor of Law and Economic Sciences. The employment process had indeed begun before he departed for the United States. We are unaware whether he had the chance to actually work or swear the oath of office (he was not present in Romania during the precise employment time), which was mandatory for public servants. The status of service names him as an employed diplomat for the Legislative Council (an institution financially subordinate to the Ministry of Justice) from 1 January 1926 to 1 July 1928, with a base wage (*leafa de bază*) of 3,200 lei/month, though 10% of his retirement pay was held back⁵¹ and the total of his earnings (including increments) was several times higher.

From 15 January 1926, Savel is noted as an employee of two institutions. Other than his work as a reviewer for the Legislative Council, he was hired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the London Legation as a financial advisor, with a fixed wage of 120 £/month.⁵² According to the *Universul* newspaper, the exchange rate was 1 £ = 1039 Romanian lei,⁵³ though by May of the same year, 1 £ was worth more than 1.200 lei.⁵⁴ In anticipation of the upcoming budgetary harmonisation law of 1 June 1927, in January 1926, the vast majority of salaries for public dignitaries were made up of various increments.

The appointment to the London Legation was not done in a typical way by decree; his file does not mention any money being held back for his retirement. As such, this appointment was contractual for a fixed period, and V. Brătianu and N. Titulescu decided to employ him. This would mean that the plurality of positions law was not broken. It is possible that his employment in London was initially unknown to the central administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that it was instead an internal decision of the London Legation. Whether Savel Rădulescu ever performed labour within the Legislative Council, which did pay him, remains unanswered.

A coded telegram from Geneva, dated 9 March 1926 and found within his file (as it happens, it is the first internal document we have about Rădulescu as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) further muddles the subject of the two isochronous jobs:

⁵¹ *Stat de serviciu*, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 34 v.

⁵² According to an online inflation calculator, 120 £ in 1926 would be worth 7820.28 £ on 10 August 2023, <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1926> (accessed on 23 August 2023).

⁵³ *Universul*, XLIV, no. 25 (31 January 1926): 4.

⁵⁴ *Universul*, XLIV, no. 108 (14 May 1926): 4.

“Confidential-Personnel

To Mister Vintilă Bratianu

I beseech you to name Savel Rădulescu as a Financial Advisor for the London Legation starting from January 15th, when he began working with us, performing real services. I need the address so that he can speak in the name of the Legation to the different British authorities I will send him to.

I dare to remind you that the wage I established with Your Excellency is one hundred and twenty British Pounds. With friendship.

Titulescu [No.] 30256”.⁵⁵

Furthermore, when he was present in Bucharest between 19 and 30 March 1927, in addition to (once again) meeting many influential individuals – V. Brătianu, I.G. Duca, V. Slăvescu, M. Manoilescu, Princess Ileana etc. – Savel Rădulescu, joined by N. Titulescu, travelled to the Legislative Council, where he cashed in a residual pay (worth 33,850).⁵⁶

Why was Savel Rădulescu worthy of being a financial counsellor for the Romanian Legation in London, given that he knew France better than the United Kingdom,⁵⁷ the Paris Legation’s leader was in good relations with N. Titulescu, and Savel had received a French education? Besides, in 1926, his knowledge of the English language was not as astute as his knowledge of French. In his file from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the known foreign languages column only lists French (“well”),⁵⁸ same for a statement he gave to Securitate officers on 25 May 1948; still, several cellmates stated that Savel taught German and English in the Communist prisons⁵⁹ and a note of the Detective Corps from October 22 1946 mentions that he knew English to perfection,⁶⁰ an opinion shared by

⁵⁵ “Personal-Confidențial

Pentru Domnul Vintilă Bratianu

Rog foarte mult a trimite numirea lui Savel Rădulescu Consilier financiar la Legațiunea din Londra pe ziua de 15 Ianuarie de când lucrează cu noi aducând reale servicii. Am nevoie de adresa pentru ca să poată vorbi în numele Legațiunei la diferite autorități britanice unde îl trimet.

Îmi permit a reaminti că salariul fixat împreună cu Domnia Voastră este de Una sută două zeci Lire Sterline. Amiciții.

Titulescu [No.] 30256”

DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 1.

⁵⁶ Cited in Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 31.

⁵⁷ The Romanian Legation in Paris was led by Constantin Diamandy from 1924 to 1930.

⁵⁸ *Stat de serviciu*, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, ds. R52, 34 r.

⁵⁹ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 48.

⁶⁰ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 119.

George G. Potra, one of the best specialists in the history of Romanian diplomacy.⁶¹

An official address dated 19 October 1928, from the Ministry of Justice to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (at the time, C. Argetoianu), which was also used as a type of certificate of seniority (from 1 January 1926 to 1 July 1928, with 10% of the base pay, 3,200 lei, withheld⁶²) also included three payment orders, totalling 214,592 lei,⁶³ the “proper wage and ancillaries”.⁶⁴ Of note is that the Legislative Council’s report regarding Rădulescu’s wage was done between the leadership of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We believe that Savel Rădulescu’s two appointments were the result of agreements of governmental powerbrokers and that the Legislative Council posting was a lead-up to a future post in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as a safety net, even if the wage was almost four times smaller than his London contract. Still, Rădulescu’s tasks as a financial advisor were by no means light and, as we will see, his role in the Optants Question was significant. In addition, diplomats often had to pay various protocol expenses, not always deducted by the Romanian state.

During the summer of 1927, Savel Rădulescu received employment offers outside the diplomatic world: director at the Credit Bank and financial advisor at the Chambers of Commerce.⁶⁵ There were also rumours that he could become General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, following N. Titulescu’s appointment as Minister. One of his and Vintilă Brătianu’s other collaborators received the post: V. Bădulescu. It seems that S. Rădulescu had another shot at becoming General Secretary – also with Titulescu’s backing – in November 1928, following the appointment of the National Peasants’ Party (from now: NPP)⁶⁶ government.

⁶¹ George G. Potra, *Titulescu la Londra în 1937*, published in *Lumea*, XIII, no. 9-11 (2006), and included in: Adrian Năstase, George G. Potra, *Titulescu. Ziditor de Mari Idealuri* (Bucharest: Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2nd revised and enlarged edition, 2008), 205.

⁶² The first gross wage as a director and financial advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs totalled 4,000 lei. In January 1930 (as a director and holding a diplomatic rank), Rădulescu received a wage of 33,900 lei, reduced due to the wage cuts of 1931 – 1933 to 22,150 lei in 1932. His monthly wage as an Undersecretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs totalled 30,400 lei. *Certificat*, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 38.

⁶³ DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 13-16.

⁶⁴ DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 13.

⁶⁵ Cited in Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 32.

⁶⁶ Victor Slăvescu, *Note și însemnări zilnice*, vol. I, *October 1923 – 1 January 1938*, under the care of, foreword and index by Georgeta Penelea-Filitti (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996), note from 11 November 1928, 50.

Savel's appointment as a clerk within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was made on 1 July 1928 (when he resigned from the Legislative Council). This time, the oath of office, mandatory for public dignitaries, was documented, dated 2 July 1928 and countersigned by Minister Titulescu (and typically performed in his presence).⁶⁷ He was employed as a financial and economic advisor.⁶⁸ The same Royal Decree fixed Savel Rădulescu as Director of the Economic Division of the Central Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶⁹ Obviously, this choice was the desire of Nicolae Titulescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but Savel had already proven efficiency and good training. The double appointment did not garner any opposition within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Nicolae Titulescu's resignation as head of Romanian diplomacy on 3 August 1928 was not followed by Rădulescu's resignation as Director. Quite the contrary, on 16 October 1928, Savel Rădulescu was selected to a ministerial commission under the presidency of Constantin Derussi, responsible for solving the Optants Question,⁷⁰ and charged with travelling to Paris. In addition, under the NPP governments, Rădulescu kept his post as Director (from 1 June 1929, he was appointed as Economic Director within the Political Division⁷¹) and was also admitted to the diplomatic corps as a Plenipotentiary Minister 2nd Class out of the gate (from 1 January 1930).⁷² This rank was a consecration of Savel Rădulescu's work in diplomacy and a boost to his power within the Ministry, regardless of whether the people in government were his friends. The appointment was not made following a contest, nor, as a matter of fact, were any other of Rădulescu's public offices within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among those who publicly opposed Rădulescu's, as well as other associates of Titulescu's, appointment to the diplomatic corps was *Viitorul*, the newspaper of NLP, which broached the – admittedly unlikely – idea that Savel Rădulescu could become a member of the Regency Council.⁷³

⁶⁷ *Jurământ*, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 9.

⁶⁸ *Stat de serviciu*, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 34 v.

⁶⁹ *Înalt Decret Regal* no. 1668 from 16 June 1928, registered at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 2 July 1928, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 6.

⁷⁰ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 47, 263 r., v.; file no. R52, 10-11.

⁷¹ *Înalt Decret Regal* no. 1406 from 3 May 1929, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 17-18.

⁷² *Înalt Decret Regal* no. 607, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 20.

⁷³ "Asigurări și precedente – Cu prilejul unor numiri la externe –" *Viitorul*, XXIII, no. 6641 (30 March 1930): 5.

On 10 September 1931, Nicolae Titulescu was elected President of the 11th Session of the LoN Assembly. Titulescu's rising influence in the LoN also meant that various Romanian diplomats received several posts. Rădulescu was very present in several LoN commissions: in January 1932, he was elected to the Administration Council of the Pensions Fund with a three-year mandate. In March 1932, he was appointed President of the Technical Committee of the Commission for Military Spending. He was a member of the Committee of the Disarmament Conference of 1932 and President of the Budgetary Commission (1935). In addition, his position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs solidified, and he became part of several internal and international committees and of the negotiations for the non-aggression pact with the U.S.S.R. He substantially influenced the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente and Romanian-Soviet negotiations.

On 21 October 1932, Savel Rădulescu became a government member as Minister Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after he was listed in 1931 – for the same office – among several cabinet proposals.⁷⁴ He kept this office until 28/29 August 1936, under five cabinets (two NPP and three NLP), the same as the titular Minister, his political patron, Nicolae Titulescu.

The Rădulescu family was well integrated within the local elite and political configuration for the entire Interwar Period. Savel Rădulescu kept close ties with Putna County, at least until 1946.⁷⁵ Especially from 1926 to 1936, when he had influence in the government, S. Rădulescu received and tried to respond to the requests for help or support of acquaintances from Putna County to be appointed or kept in various public offices.⁷⁶ Still, the three sons did not follow their father's example and did not add "Putna" to their "Rădulescu" surname. For the diplomat Rădulescu, this suffix would not have been of use; in fact, we are unaware of any instance in which he ever used it.

The Hungarian Optants Question and Savel Rădulescu's responsibilities

From January 1926 to July 1928, Savel Rădulescu was one of the key members of the Romanian team, led by Titulescu, which was mandated to solve the Optants Question. According to the Trianon Peace Treaty (Article

⁷⁴ Constantin Argetoianu, *Memorii. Pentru cei de Mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri*, vol. IX, part VIII (1930 – 1931), edition and index by Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Machiavelli, 1997), 167, 214-215; Nicolae Iorga, *Memorii. Încercarea guvernării peste partide (1931 – 1932)*, vol. VI (Bucharest, s.n., 1939), note from 19 April 1931, 88.

⁷⁵ See: Dumitrescu, "Vasile Țiroiu și Savel Rădulescu. Corespondență".

⁷⁶ NHA, Fond Savel Rădulescu, file no.: 116, 127, 141, 154, 200, etc.

61),⁷⁷ those who resided in one of the successor states were automatically granted citizenship for the country, but could also opt for a different citizenship. The Hungarian optants were former Austro-Hungarian citizens who resided in the territories that became part of Czechoslovakia, of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and of Romania after 1918, who chose to (legally) opt for Hungarian citizenship. This decision did not always settle the issue of their real estate holdings in the successor states of which they were not citizens.

However, there was a consensus in Romania in all of its provinces, including those integrated in 1918, in favour of a large-scale land reform. This process, executed between 1918 and 1921,⁷⁸ was ample and bureaucratically complex. The landowners' nationality was not taken into account, and hundreds of Hungarian optants, among many other foreigners, were expropriated. Among them were several landowners with very large estates.

In Transylvania, the legal framework of the land reform was initiated during the tenure of several autonomous regional institutions (The Grand National Assembly and the Ruling Council). As such, the Decree-Law of 12 September 1919 (ratified by King Ferdinand) fully expropriated all the properties of absentee landowners in Transylvania (the future optants among them). This decree law was furthered by multiple decrees and instructions.⁷⁹ The imprecisions, addenda and need for Parliament to adopt a legal framework led to the 30 July 1921 *Land Reform in Transylvania, the Banat, Crișana and Maramureș Law*,⁸⁰ as well as an implementing regulation, adopted on 4 November 1921.⁸¹ The law and its provisions differed among the historical regions (minimum expropriated acreage, exceptions).⁸²

Unlike other expropriated large landowners – Romanians or the members of ethnic minorities in Romania – the Hungarian optants could

⁷⁷ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 136 (21 September 1920) 4725, The English text can be found at: https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Trianon (accessed on 25 August 2023).

⁷⁸ Several decree-laws were passed for each historical region, the first being the Old Kingdom (the decree-laws of 14 and 15 December 1918).

⁷⁹ The legal documents which supplemented the Decree-Law of 12 September 1919 are mentioned by Adrian Onofrei, "Legislația agrară în Transilvania în perioada interbelică (1918-1940)," *Revista Bistriței*, vol. VII (1993): 231.

⁸⁰ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 93 (30 July 1921) https://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm_act_text?idt=65850 (accessed on 23 August 2023).

⁸¹ *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 174 (4 November 1921). The regulation was modified several times, on 27 May 1922, 30 November 1922 and 1 August 1923.

⁸² As such, absentee landowners in Transylvania who owned fewer than 50 yokes were exempted. Dumitru Șandru, *Reforma agrară din 1921 în România* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1975), 116.

not directly defend their rights. Thus, even if they recognised the new Romanian authorities, the forced land leasing to the peasants and the later expropriation were done while the landowners could not intervene. In addition, the Hungarian optants were dissatisfied with the reparation's quantum and the payment terms. Shortly after the land reform began in Transylvania (including the Banat, Maramureş and Partium), they addressed the Romanian authorities and filed complaints to the LoN to defend their rights, citing Articles 61, 63 and 250 of the Trianon Treaty of 4 June 1920. Hungary also filed complaints, citing discriminatory measures. The various structural transformations – the new borders, the citizenship issue, the construction of new nation-states, and social reforms – built up to a major international lawsuit, also associated with war reparations and the LoN.⁸³ During the Peace Conference, the Budapest government protested as early as February 1920 against the expropriation of foreign citizens.⁸⁴ Hungary addressed the LoN on 15 March 1923, on the Optants Question (taking into account Article 2 of the LoN Pact).

The optants and the Budapest government advocated that the Romanian land reform contravened the Treaty of Trianon and demanded the full restitution of mobile and immobile properties and the payment of certain compensations and expenses.⁸⁵ The plaintiffs asserted the Romanian land reform law was a liquidation measure contrary to Article 250 of the Treaty of Trianon.⁸⁶ Certain jurists and law specialists concurred that, as a consequence of the peace treaties, national sovereignty was not intangible, a notion opposed by the Bucharest government. The plaintiffs, the Budapest government, the lawyers and lobbyists closely collaborated during this struggle for the rights of the optants, which generated public support in the West.

At the end of 1923, separate from the complaints to the LoN, several Hungarian citizens referred the matter to the Hungarian-Romanian Mixed Arbitral Tribunal⁸⁷ (from now: MAT), based in Paris.⁸⁸

⁸³ Antal Berkes, "The League of Nations and the Optants' Dispute in the Hungarian Borderlands," in Peter Becker, Natasha Wheatley (eds.), *Remaking Central Europe: The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 283.

⁸⁴ Berkes, "The League of Nations and the Optants' Dispute in the Hungarian Borderlands," 295.

⁸⁵ Francis Déak, "The Rumanian-Hungarian Dispute before the Council of the League of Nations," *California Law Review*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Jan. 1928): 125.

⁸⁶ André Proudhomme, *Rôle et pouvoir du Conseil de la Société des Nations dans le différend* (included in the file: *La réforme agraire roumaine et les ressortissants hongrois devant la Société des Nations*), *Journal du droit international*, tom 54 (1927): 849.

⁸⁷ According to the peace treaties, several mixed arbitration courts were created following the First World War – French-German, Romanian-Hungarian – (under the control of the

Some 389 optants addressed the MAT,⁸⁹ and around 350 sent petitions from December 1923 to January 1927.⁹⁰ This forum declared itself fit to rule in this issue in January 1927. Romania opposed its jurisdiction in the Optants Question.

The complaints lodged to the MAT garnered public attention, and multiple international law specialists were hired or offered their services to the Hungarians and/or Romanians. Romania argued that, on all the issues, including the land reform, foreign citizens were not treated differently from Romanian ones and that, regardless, this was the right of a sovereign state. As a result, it tried denying the jurisdiction of the MAT in this case. In the second half of 1927, the Romanian team tried to get as many foreign jurists as possible to write and publish studies and articles on the Optants Question, which would support Bucharest's arguments. This was done in parallel to the Hungarian campaign and involved massive efforts from the diplomats: the selection and negotiations with these jurists, as well as the occasional long discussions or attempts to correct or sweeten specific arguments, phrases or conclusions. The experts that opined on the issue in one way or another needed to be seen as independent by international institutions, journalists and the legal world.

Since Nicolae Titulescu was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs on 6 July 1927, Romania's de facto representative on the Optants Question in London became Savel Rădulescu.⁹¹ The London-Bucharest correspondence kept in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive shows that Rădulescu had authority in the Optants Question over other dignitaries in London, such as Dimitrie Ciotori or Constantin Laptew.

Initially, the Romanian government focused on gaining the support of certain influential French jurists. Still, the British arena was a significant stake. It was essential to counterbalance the pro-Hungarian propaganda in the newspapers owned by Lord Rothermere (*Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*) and the International Law Association of London. At the same time, the Romanian lobby was much less present in London than in Paris and much inferior to the Hungarian one. The pro-Romanian legal opinion of certain

LoN) which mainly covered the issue of the former enemies' assets. For a concise description, see: *Application des traités des paix. Traité de Trianon (4 juin 1920): Archives du tribunal arbitral mixte roumano-hongrois et autres...*, <https://francearchives.fr/fr/findingaid/32dd219dfb584388cdea98c0954f61da5e73f445> (accessed on 26 August 2023).

⁸⁸ This forum was created due to Article 239 of the Treaty of Trianon.

⁸⁹ Berkes, "The League of Nations and the Optants' Dispute in the Hungarian Borderlands," 305.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁹¹ In Paris, this post was exercised by Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen.

English university men, usually published in expert studies, could be disseminated in the media and thus reach the public at large.

Savel Rădulescu was in Geneva in September 1927, during the LoN deliberations on the Optants Question. From Geneva, he travelled to San Remo (30 September – 16 October 1927), where he had several meetings with N. Titulescu, and returned to London in October, later arriving in Paris on 15 November 1927, where he stayed for the rest of the year. In an encrypted telegram, dated 25 October 1927, Rădulescu informed Titulescu about the visits he and D. Ciotori had paid to Cambridge to meet with Alexander Pearce Higgins, an international law professor,⁹² the consultation he had with Scotus Viator (R.W. Seton-Watson's pseudonym) and that Oxford was his next stop.⁹³ Several days later, Rădulescu informed Bucharest about the preliminary results of other talks with James Leslie Brierly, professor at the University of Cambridge and with J.E.G. Montmorency from the University of London, both specialists in international law, and mentioned other names that he held in reserve.⁹⁴ Higgins, Montmorency and Brierly agreed to provide legal counselling⁹⁵ and were each paid 200 £, on Titulescu's direct orders. Another name Rădulescu would have liked to bring to Romania's side was Thomas Barklay. In addition, he proposed other jurists outside England in his communications with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁹⁶

After several MAT meetings, the Romanian government found a solution to block its activity by withdrawing the Romanian arbiter Constantin Antoniaide, which led to a deadlock. The LoN Council suggested that the Permanent Court of International Justice solve the issue, but Romania, through its representative (Nicolae Titulescu), firmly opposed this. In a meeting on March 18 1928, Titulescu argued that the involvement of the MAT was an unjustified interference.⁹⁷ For its part, Hungary tried to restart the MAT's work, asking that the LoN Council automatically replace the Romanian arbiter.⁹⁸ To solve the issue, the LoN Council mandated a three-person committee formed by diplomats from Chile, Japan, and the United Kingdom (Austen Chamberlain). This committee was unable to reconcile the two sides but wrote a report that

⁹² Future president of the Institute of International Law (1929 – 1931) and member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague.

⁹³ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 45, 169.

⁹⁴ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 45, 181 r., v.

⁹⁵ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 45, 236, 268.

⁹⁶ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 45, 185 r., v.

⁹⁷ Proudhomme, *Rôle et pouvoir du Conseil de la Société des Nations*, 851.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 851.

was read in the LoN Council meeting of 17 September 1927. This text is especially important, as it addresses the matter of the jurisdiction of this forum in inter-state conflicts.⁹⁹ It also concluded that the land reform was not a liquidation measure targeting the properties of Hungarian citizens in Transylvania. The LoN Council attempted to calm the dispute between Romania and Hungary several times between September 1927 – March 1928 through failed attempts to normalize Hungarian-Romanian relations and through meetings in San Remo, Opatija, and Viena.¹⁰⁰

Up to Titulescu's resignation on 3 August 1928, Savel Rădulescu closely assisted him in the Optants Question in London, Paris and Geneva. Titulescu's resignation did not also entail his departure from the issue. Furthermore, the Liberal government acknowledged Rădulescu's expertise on the matter and appointed him to the ministerial commission for the Optants Question under the presidency of Constantin Derussi on 16 October 1928.¹⁰¹ There is a note next to his name: "expert in the commission to solve the issue of the optants, on a mission to Paris."¹⁰²

For late 1920s Europe, the issue of German war reparations was more imperative than the Optants Question. The discussions and negotiations between the Great Powers led to the Young Plan. The issue of Hungarian, Austrian and Bulgarian war reparations was also discussed internationally. As a result, a committee was formed to analyse the war reparations owed by these three countries, particularly Hungary.¹⁰³ In the end, it was decided that the war reparations Hungary owed would be paid into a fund destined to compensate the optants. The Hague Convention was signed on 20 January 1930,¹⁰⁴ later joined in a definitive version by the Paris Convention of 28 April 1930. Fund A¹⁰⁵ – a

⁹⁹ Ibid., 852.

¹⁰⁰ The leader of the Hungarian delegation was Baron József Sztérényi, and the Romanian delegation was led by Constantin Langa-Rășcanu.

¹⁰¹ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 47, 263 r., v.; file no. R52, 10-11.

¹⁰² "expert în comisiunea soluționării chestiunii optanților (fiind) în misiune la Paris", DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 47, 263 r., v.; file no. R52, 10-11.

¹⁰³ Berkes, "The League of Nations and the Optants' Dispute in the Hungarian Borderlands," 311.

¹⁰⁴ The Hague Accords were signed following the end of certain reunions between 3-20 January 1930 between the Great Powers who had won the First World War, other winning states and/or successor states and defeated states and covered, among others: the issue of debts, especially of Germany, certain loan guarantees, the creation of the Agrarian Fund and of Fund B.

¹⁰⁵ The money in this Fund came from: the war reparations Hungary owed to the Great Powers; annuities paid by Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (the annuities unclaimed by the former plaintiffs) and from the annual contributions of these three countries.

legal entity to compensate the Hungarian optants for losing their properties in Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia – and Fund B – for other disputes unrelated to the land reform¹⁰⁶ – were created. The money in Fund A was to come from Hungary (on account of the war reparations), France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Japan and Portugal, and the member states of the Little Entente. Hungary was to make the payments covering 31 December 1943 - 1966.¹⁰⁷

Savel Rădulescu fulfilled different missions up to April 1930 – officially and unofficially (as Titulescu’s prime-collaborator) – in the Optants Question. Here is an incomplete list of his work:

- assisting and counselling Titulescu in his endeavours and public intercessions. Rădulescu’s presence is not visible at first glance, but he worked to build Romania’s official viewpoint on the economic and financial side from the ground up. Still, other than his superiors, it seems that Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen more greatly influenced Titulescu;¹⁰⁸
- selecting and coopting certain English jurists (alongside Dimitrie Ciotori);
- communicating with other jurists and politicians outside England (for instance, with the Chilean jurist Alejandro Alvarez) – especially given that he was well-known as a close associate of Titulescu;
- he was not only on a mission for the Optants Question in London, but also in Paris and Geneva;
- as a close associate of Titulescu, many of the reports sent to him also reached Rădulescu; he often acted as Titulescu’s representative in various meetings;
- alongside Petrescu-Comnen and others, he was responsible for the published works which covered the studies and legal advice of certain foreign jurists;¹⁰⁹
- he was a member of the Commission in the Optants Question created in October 1928 (which operated as such for less than a month);

¹⁰⁶ The Hague Accords also created the Bank for International Settlements (Banque des Règlements Internationaux).

¹⁰⁷ Berkes, “The League of Nations and the Optants’ Dispute in the Hungarian Borderlands,” 312.

¹⁰⁸ On this figure, I recommend the exceptional work of Adrian Vițălaru, *Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen. Diplomat* (Iași: Editura Universității din Iași „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2018).

¹⁰⁹ See Rădulescu’s proposals to Savel regarding publishing... in English as well, and its printing, telegram from 19 December 1927, DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 45, 386-389, telegram from 30 December 1927, 390.

- he lectured on the subject. He held a conference at the Romanian Social Institute in Bucharest on 18 January 1931 – part of several lectures with other guests in Sibiu as well (on 30 March 1931).

Besides the Romanian-Hungarian dispute regarding the optants, Savel Rădulescu also had other missions and duties. He was involved in the loan and stabilisation issue and the war reparations. In Romania, he was also a member of the Commission for Studying Private Railways, a referee in a commission regarding the issue of the war debt, reparations and the complaints of French citizens¹¹⁰ and in a separate commission regarding the Danube.

If we take a look at the locations Savel Rădulescu travelled to between 1924 and 1930, we see a large amount of work, often accompanying and assisting Nicolae Titulescu. In London, Geneva and Bucharest, Titulescu built a team of close collaborators who stayed by his side, some even after August 1936. Some of these collaborators are among the founding members of the *Nicolae Titulescu Association*.¹¹¹

A globe-trotting diplomat¹¹²

Timeframe	Country/cities	Purpose
16 July – 30 August 1924	London	The conference where the final adoption of the Dawes Plan was discussed
7-14 January 1925	Paris	The Allied Finance Minister Conference
September – October 1925	Geneva	LoN
October 1925 – January 1926	U.S.A.	Settling Romania's debt to the U.S.A.
January – November 1926	London	Legation work
24 November – 31 December 1926	Geneva	Optants?
4-16 March 1927	Geneva	Optants?
19-30 March 1927	Bucharest	
8 April– 15 May	San Remo ¹¹³	Vacation – healthcare

¹¹⁰ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 34.

¹¹¹ S. Rădulescu, C. Vișoianu, Ion Christu, E. Ciuntu, M. Ispasiu or his nephew S. Nenișor etc., *Universul*, LXII, no. 156 (13 July 1945): 3.

¹¹² See: Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 18-50.

¹¹³ San Remo and Saint Moritz were favourite vacation places of the Interwar Period elites, as well as for diplomatic and political meetings by Nicolae Titulescu and other European politicians and diplomats.

1927		
17 May- 7 July 1927	London	Legation work, optants
7 July- 7 September 1927	Saint Moritz	Vacation?
7-29 September 1927	Geneva	Optants
30 September- October 1927	San Remo	Vacation?
17 October- 22 October 1927	Paris	Optants
23 October- 15 November 1927	London	Optants
15 November- 31 December 1927 (?)	Paris	Optants
March 1928	Geneva	Optants
6-13 June 1929	Madrid	The minorities issues
Summer 1929	Morocco and Portugal	Member of the Romanian delegation, joining N. Titulescu from the June 1929 Madrid Conference
6-30 August 1929	The Hague	The Rhineland, the issue of war reparations (the adoption of the Young Plan)
October - November 1929	Paris	The Technical Committee for the Optants Question, the issue of reparations. ¹¹⁴
December	Saint Moritz	Vacation
4-19 January 1930	The Hague	German and Eastern reparations, the approval of the Young Plan, and the signing of the Convention for the Optants Question
February 1930	Paris	The Young Plan - works of the Technical Committees; the Reparations Commission. ¹¹⁵
May 1930	Paris	Signing the Convention for the Optants Question
September 1930	Geneva	The 11 th Session of the LoN Assembly - Titulescu was elected president on 10 September 1930, and ran against Apponyi and Hjalmar (withdrawn)

¹¹⁴ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 60, 29.

¹¹⁵ DAMFA, Fond Problema 11, file no. 60, 2.

Savel Rădulescu's life under the dictatorships

Following his dismissal as Undersecretary of State, Rădulescu's career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was over, but he did not withdraw from public life. He was only 41 at the time and had built a large circle of acquaintances, friends, and enemies. In early 1938, the news that Rădulescu had joined the NPP was published.¹¹⁶ He was a brief member, as the political parties were disbanded following the 10 February 1938 *coup d'état*. He had a cold relationship with King Carol II. Still, out of fear or opportunism,¹¹⁷ like many of Titulescu's collaborators, Savel Rădulescu joined the National Renaissance Front in December 1938.¹¹⁸

The relations he had built in Romania and abroad, as well as his professional and intellectual training, allowed him to find other employment: he was a delegate administrator at the Mining Credit Society from November 1939 to November 1944, a post which he did not later recover due to a bad rapport with Costin Stoicescu.¹¹⁹ He was part of the leadership committee of the *Reșița* Society until 1945.¹²⁰ He was also a member of the Administrative Council of the Phone Society and delegate administrator of the "Cartea Românească" Society.¹²¹ In 1948, his wealth comprised a house in Bucharest (Zoe Avenue, no. 4) and seven and a half acres (*pogoane*) of land near Câmpulung Muscel.¹²² Still, even before his arrest in 1948, multiple informants and employees of the Romanian Intelligence Service (*Siguranță*) and the Detective Corps mentioned in their notes his poor financial health and that he had borrowed money from his brother.¹²³

The political ascension of General Ion Antonescu, his former colleague in the London Legation (a military attaché from January 1924 to July 1926), did not restore Savel Rădulescu's status. He was considered an English sympathiser and was closely watched by the *Siguranță*,¹²⁴ at least since early 1941, including due to the fact that he was a member of Country Club Romania.¹²⁵ In addition, Savel Rădulescu had met with

¹¹⁶ *Dreptatea*, XII, no. 3038 (5 January 1938): 4.

¹¹⁷ Ioan Hudiță wrote what Mihai Ispasiu told him, whose choice was motivated by Savel Rădulescu. We note that the National Peasants leader was not fond of Rădulescu. Hudiță, *Jurnal politic, 16 septembrie 1938 – 30 aprilie 1939*, [vol. 2], record from 19 February 1939, 241.

¹¹⁸ *Universul*, LV, no. 355 (31 December 1938): 7.

¹¹⁹ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 68. According to a commissary in the Detective Corps' report from 21 December 1946, Rădulescu had seemingly returned to the Mining Credit Society up to 1946. ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 62.

¹²⁰ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 68.

¹²¹ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 13 v.

¹²² ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 12 r.

¹²³ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 120.

¹²⁴ See, for example, several notes from March 1943, ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 90-100.

¹²⁵ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 81, 82,

King Michael I several times during the war. In 1943, the Secret Intelligence Service investigated a possible flight abroad. In 1947, the Romanian Intelligence Service, now under the Communist thumb, noted that the Antonescu regime had oppressed Rădulescu.¹²⁶

Given that his name was well-known to foreign governments, that he had been part of Titulescu's team, which had negotiated a treaty with the U.S.S.R. and that he had not supported the Antonescu regime, it was to be expected that Savel Rădulescu would return to the frontlines of the political and diplomatic scene. On 31 October 1944, he was appointed a member of the Romania-United Nations Armistice Commission.¹²⁷ On 20 November 1944, he was even appointed president of this forum, following the resignation of Ion Christu, in a decree countersigned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Constantin Vișoianu.¹²⁸ All three of them had been close collaborators of N. Titulescu. We believe that this appointment is owed to Minister Constantin Vișoianu, with the King's blessing,¹²⁹ as well as to the future Prime Minister, General Nicolae Rădescu, a London colleague of Rădulescu, where he had been a military attaché (1926 – 1928). In October 1944, General Rădescu was the Army Chief of Staff. On 20 February 1945, Rădulescu received an additional task from Vișoianu and the King: to become a member of the Commission for the Studying of Resources and the Preparation of Documents (for the next Peace Conference).¹³⁰

Savel Rădulescu resigned as head of the Romania-United Nations Armistice Commission on 10 April 1945. Documents from the CNSAS Archive and other testimonies imply that this was Savel Rădulescu's way of protesting the excessive Soviet demands, a dissent delivered to King Michael I and to Western politicians and diplomats. A Detective Corps report covering Savel Rădulescu's audience with the King after his resignation states that the former believed that "... he could not stay in an office meant to sell all of the country's goods."¹³¹

The former diplomat was arrested on 12 May 1948, under the pretext that engineer Ion Bujoiu (businessman and politician) had

¹²⁶ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 145.

¹²⁷ DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 43.

¹²⁸ *Înalt Decret Regal* no. 2216 from 21 November 1944, DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 39.

¹²⁹ Petre Pandrea argues – mistakenly, we believe – that Savel Rădulescu received this office following Ana Pauker's orders, Petre Pandrea, "Nicolae Titulescu, conferențiar la Berlin," in *Soarele melancoliei. Memorii*, preface by Ștefan Dimitriu, under the care of Nadia Marcu-Pandrea (Bucharest: Editura Vremea XXI, 2005), 75.

¹³⁰ DAMFA, Fond Problema 77, file no. R52, 45.

¹³¹ "... nu putea rămâne într-un post de vânzare a tuturor bunurilor țării", ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 67.

mentioned that he was part of a subversive organization.¹³² Bujoiu himself had noted that Rădulescu refused to join this organization.¹³³ The Securitate proceeding of 30 November 1950, on this investigation concluded that:

“Following the investigation of the mentioned RADULESCU SAVEL, it does not follow that the suspect was part of Engineer BUJOIU’s subversive organisation or that he had known of BUJOIU’s or others’ intentions to harm the Romanian State.

PROPOSALS

However, given that the above-mentioned RADULESCU SAVEL has previously held public office within historical governments, we propose: his internment in a prison, where he will share in the fate of other dignitaries.”¹³⁴

The Securitate believed he was an informant of the Foreign Intelligence Section without concrete proof. Savel Rădulescu was arrested by the General Directorate of the Securitate and held in the Craiova, Jilava, Sighet and Ocnele Mari prisons, from which he was released on 23 June 1954,¹³⁵ more than six years after his arrest. The Securitate was aware of his health issues before his arrest and was admitted to several prison hospitals (Văcărești). He was condemned in 1951, following decision no. 334, to 24 months, which lapsed on 1 August 1953 and increased by 60 months.¹³⁶

After his release, according to the notes of informants and the reports of Securitate officers, it seems that Rădulescu knew not to open up to others¹³⁷ and mostly insisted on recognising his right to retirement pay.¹³⁸ In addition, Securitate informants underlined that he was afraid of

¹³² ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 7.

¹³³ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 18.

¹³⁴ “Din cercetarea dusă cu numitul RADULESCU SAVEL, nu a reușit că susnumitul ar fi făcut parte din organizația subversivă a Ing. BUJOIU sau că ar fi știut ceva despre intențiile lui BUJOIU sau ale altora, de a leza interesele Statului Român

PROPUNERI

Ținând însă cont de faptul că susnumitul RADULESCU SAVEL a făcut parte din fostele guverne istorice ca demnitar, propunem: internarea sa într-un penitenciar, unde să împărtășească soarta celorlalți demnitari.” ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 8-9.

¹³⁵ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 49.

¹³⁶ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 190.

¹³⁷ ANCSSA, file no. I 3642, 8, 39.

¹³⁸ Note from March 15, 1958, ANCSSA, file no. I 3642, 34, 36 v., 41.

being arrested again.¹³⁹ Like other dignitaries from before 1948, he had a difficult financial situation until the mid-1960s. These files imply that Savel Rădulescu, celibate for his entire life, knew how to ingratiate himself to high society women, such as Martha Bibescu, Louise Gunther – the wife of Franklin Mott Gunther, the United States ambassador to Romania.¹⁴⁰

Conclusions

Rădulescu was chosen by Titulescu as a close collaborator in London in 1927 and as the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1932, not just due to his workmanship, but also for his different qualities. He was physically attractive, loyal to the Titulescu family and able to communicate with others. Some valued that he had fought in the war and had been awarded by the French government. He was a constant presence up to 1947 at various receptions, dinners and meetings with diplomats (the American, English, French legations, etc.) and foreign businessmen.¹⁴¹ He was also not forgotten by the friends and acquaintances he had made as a student or diplomat: Jean Paul-Boncour, the leader of the French legation after 1945 and a friend of Savel's from the 1920s¹⁴² or Louise Gunther.

Titulescu also valued Savel's network of protectors and friends, partly owed to his father and brother. As a matter of fact, Savel Rădulescu's appointment in 1928 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was made at Nicolae Titulescu's insistences, with the support of Vintilă Brătianu and I.G. Duca, who already knew him very well.¹⁴³

Savel Rădulescu was an essential component of Titulescu's team, especially during the Optants Question, but also regarding other responsibilities of the London Legation and prospects, crystallized at the peak of the Romanian-Hungarian optants dispute, namely the 1926 – 1927 timeframe. Savel Rădulescu had qualities desired by the Romanian powerbrokers of late 1925 – V. Brătianu (Minister of Finance), I.G. Duca (Minister of Foreign Affairs), N. Titulescu (leader of the Romanian team) – for new employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:¹⁴⁴ education in law, economics and finances, as well as experience in these fields.

¹³⁹ ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 234-235.

¹⁴⁰ ANCSSA, file no. I 3642, 21.

¹⁴¹ In a Securitate agent report from 8 November 1946, it is stated that S. Rădulescu and L. Gunther were having "romantic relations", ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 51.

¹⁴² ANCSSA, file no. P 6615, 55.

¹⁴³ Dumitrescu, *Diplomatul Savel Rădulescu*, 36-37.

¹⁴⁴ See also the case of Mihai Ispasiu – another close associate of Titulescu, who had a degree in Law, but, before being named as Director of Funds and Accounting at the

We do not believe it is wrong to regard Savel Rădulescu as the *first adjutant* of Titulescu, and his involvement in the Optants Question was significant. Rădulescu had a close relationship with his former boss' widow and was a constant public defender of Titulescu after August 1936. This partisanship helped him in the 1960s, when the Communists reclaimed Titulescu, giving Savel certain material rights (his retirement pay) and some public visibility. Although Savel Rădulescu is often portrayed unfavourably in the memoirs of his contemporaries, which criticised him as a servant of Titulescu and as mediocre,¹⁴⁵ his biography portrays an intelligent character with notable diplomatic abilities and a great working capacity. In addition, the ANCSSA files do not point to his role as President of the Armistice Commission as determining his arrest, investigation and sentencing, but rather the fact that he was a former Undersecretary of State.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he had a long career within the Ministry of Finances, Andrei Florin Sora, "Mihai Ispasiu (1883-1974). Biografia unui înalt funcționar public din Ministerul Afacerilor Străine," *Litua. Studii și cercetări*, XXV (2023): 341-352.

¹⁴⁵ Argetoianu, *Memorii. Pentru cei de Mâine*, vol. IX, 214-215; Hudiță, *Jurnal politic (13 mai – 18 august 1947)*, note from 16 August 1947, 283.