

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE EQUIPPING OF THE ROMANIAN ARMED FORCES IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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Rezumat

Colaborarea anglo-română în domeniul înzestrării armatei române cu armament modern a fost un insucces din toate punctele de vedere. Cauzele pentru acest eșec sunt multiple: incompetența reprezentanților români trimiși la Londra pentru a negocia achizițiile; influența nefastă a generalului Mihail Belyaev care i-a convins pe britanici că aprovizionarea armatei române cu armament era inutilă, deoarece urma să fie integrată în armata rusă; preconcepțiile existente la nivelul Ministerului Munițiilor de la Londra, preferându-se alimentarea armatei române prin intermediul Rusiei, lăsând-o practic la mila acesteia. România a fost salvată de guvernul francez, care și-a asumat aprovizionarea și reechiparea armatei române.

Cuvinte cheie: Ministry of Munitions, Belaiev, George Benson, W.T. Layton, Cpt. Arion, howitzer, Petrograd Conference.

The Entente won a great diplomatic battle by signing the Treaty of 17 August 1916, by which Romania joined the Entente, but the Allies wanted to profit as much as possible from Romania's entering the war. Accepting Romanian prime-minister Ionel Brătianu's conditions, the Romanian armed forces stormed over the Carpathian summits, trying to occupy Transylvania and consequently deal a decisive blow to Austria-Hungary.

Great Britain had committed itself to support Romania's war effort by equipping the Romanian armed forces with modern weapons. Mention should be made that, in turn, Great Britain faced a series of difficulties in equipping its own armed forces. At the beginning of 1915 the London public opinion found out with great worry that there was a risk for their armed forces to run out of artillery ammunition.

In order to solve this urgent situation, a Ministry of Munitions was set up on 9 June 1915. This new institution was meant to organize qualified labour force for producing war ammunition, so that the government could negotiate more easily with the companies that supported the British war effort. The most important argument for setting up the new ministry was that, in this way, from that moment on all procurement for Great Britain or for the Allies was subordinated to an unique command. Thus, it was hoped that the many malfunctions in equipping the

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troops fighting on the front and supplying them with ammunition would be solved. At the head of the new ministry was appointed David Lloyd George, an opportunity for him to impose himself in the limelight of British policy and highlight his organizational qualities. The institution led by Lloyd George was also to have the mission of supporting the Romanian war effort, a year later.

The Romanian government sent Colonel Vasile Rudeanu to France, to solve the enormous deficit of war material, in case that Romania was to enter the war. In early September 1915 Rudeanu met with Lloyd George, who requested from the Colonel a list with the urgent needs of the Romanian armed forces. After the meeting with the British official, the Colonel hoped for an improved attitude on behalf of the British government as regarded Romania's preparation for war¹.

Unfortunately, despite Rudeanu's hopes, the British government did not meet the Romanian demands. Moreover, in the spring of 1916 the Ministry of Munitions from London issued a document that forbade the export to Romania of materials specific of various industries, as well as their finite products. If we analyze the list of materials forbidden from export to Romania we may conclude that at that moment there was actually an embargo against the Kingdom of Romania.

The list comprised the following: the machine building industry (various accessories, engines, tires, wheels, vehicles and planes), the textile industry (linen, hemp, wool, cotton, animal products, footwear), extractive industry (coal, oil, heating oil), animals (horses, cattle, pigs), chemical products (sulphur, sulphates, phosphates, nitrites, glycerin, glucose, paraffin, soap and caustic soda), building materials and tools (cement, wood, cables, barbed wire, shovels and pickaxes), metals (lead, iron, tin) in wires or sheets, medical products (medicine, bandages, surgical instruments), stationery (paper, ink, candles), food products (oil, sunflower seeds) and communication instruments (telegraph, radio-telegraph, telephonic devices)².

This list shows London's distrust in Romania's attitude in the early 1916.

Even though the London Cabinet knew about the serious problems Romania was facing as to the acquisition of modern weapons³, it was only after the Kingdom of Romania entered the war that London, implicitly the Ministry of Munitions, took seriously the requests of the Romanian government. Colonel Rudeanu submitted to the British the following order: 3.000.000 cartridges caliber 7.7mm/week, 3.000.000 cartridges caliber 6.5mm/week, 70 Maxim machine guns, 200 Vickers machine guns, 130 Hotchkiss machine guns, telemeters, sidecars for transporting the machine guns, T.N.T., various types of howitzers and cannons⁴.

¹ General Vasile Rudeanu, *Memorii din timp de pace și război*, Edit. Militară, Bucharest, 1989, pg. 194.

² TNA, MUN, 4/2179, Minister of Munitions to Board of Trade, f. 1-3, 11 April 1916.

³ *Ibidem*, C.A.B, 24/2, *Memorandum Former Reference*, G85, f. 5-6, General W.R. Robertson, October 1916

⁴ *Ibidem*, MUN, 4/3083, George Booth to Edwin Samuel Montague, Report from 14 September 1916.

Initially, the Romanian government submitted the military equipment orders separately to the French and the British governments, the list being the same, which created a confusing situation that the two governments were forced to try to solve.

At the time when the Romanian armed forces were fighting against the Central Powers, the leadership of the Ministry of Munitions was ensured by David Lloyd George, Edwin Samuel Montagu, Christopher Addison and Winston Churchill.

In September 1916 the British Ministry initiated some preliminary inquiries as to Romania's demands. The payment for the supplied war material was meant to be made in the same way as Russia did. From a strictly procedural point of view, the British wanted to negotiate with the Romanians in the same way as with the Russians. The Romanian and the British parties scheduled a preliminary meeting to establish the details of the order. The British needed firm assurance from the Romanian and the French governments that there would not be identical armament orders in France and Great Britain, as the Romanians turned out to have already done⁵.

Before the armament orders sorely needed by the Romanian government materialized, London wanted to perfect the way they would be paid for. The Ministry of Munitions tried to obtain from the Treasury the amount of money the future delivery to Romania might cost. The Romanian representatives were to decide the amount of equipment they wanted to order, within the financial limits imposed by the British Treasury. Once the two above mentioned conditions were met, those in charge with weapon production in London could start working. The order could be carried out even in factories in Canada or the USA. For the beginning, they considered 5 million pounds as a minimum sum to be granted by Treasury. The leaders of the Ministry of Munitions deemed that, if the British wanted to equip and supply the Romanian armed forces, then it was necessary to have some regulations and guidelines for these operations⁶. Later on, as mentioned above, they wanted to apply the same procedures as with Russia.

After discussions involving the Foreign Office, the Treasury and the Ministry of Munitions, it was decided that all Romanian armament orders should be paid for from the 1 billion francs account opened by the French government in London especially for this action⁷.

The officials from the Ministry of Munitions agreed with Col. Rudeanu's requests, with a few exceptions: they could not supply cartridges for the Mannlicher rifles used by the Romanian armed forces, but all the other requests could be negotiated. Romania was allotted 300 tons of armament daily in the Archangelsk-Kola port and 150 tons in Vladivostok. The Romanian government

⁵ TNA, MUN, 4/3083, George Booth to Edwin Samuel Montague, Report from 14 September 1916.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 4/3091, W.J. Benson to George Booth, Report from 7 November 1916.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 4/3087, O.C. Allen to Major General Callwell, Report from 21 January 1917.

was advised to accept this number, at least during the winter⁸. The British officials' goodwill as to supplying the Romanian armed forces with military equipment is obvious, yet one could foresee the transportation problems that were to hinder Romania's supplies with armament during the war because of the blocked Straits and the necessity of using the Russian railways.

Although initially the Romanian party ordered 1.000.000 rifles, the final figure was 100.000. Though the order was ten times less, the British were not able to finalize it, so they resorted to the Americans, who had 100.000 rifles stored in Vladivostok. If this move was to fail, the War Office was willing to offer 100.000 Ross rifles caliber 7.7mm produced in Canada, which at that moment were being used by secondary troops (for drills, volunteers or the sailors in Malta)⁹. There was one more problem: what was the priority of these rifles for the War Office? A sensitive issue regarding these rifles was to inform the Russian government that the 100.000 weapons meant to be delivered to the Russian armed forces right before Christmas were to be redirected to the Romanians¹⁰. This was something that could lead to further repercussions, therefore the authorities in Petrograd had to be approached very tactfully. Eventually, the American weapons were not delivered to the Romanians either; no reason was given, but one may suppose that they did not manage to convince the Russians of the Romanian armed forces' urgent need for those rifles.

In the British government's meetings, the Head of the War Office suggested some diplomatic preparation for cancelling the rifle order submitted to Great Britain, so as not to arouse disappointment in the Romanian government¹¹, although the meeting of 16 November had established that in Romania there were 300.000 soldiers who did not have weapons and who had to be equipped as soon as possible.

There was still the issue of the 6.5 mm cartridges for the Mannlicher rifle used by the Romanian armed forces. To solve this situation, George Booth (deputy director of the procurement department in the London Ministry) suggested that the old British factories that were producing 7.7mm bullets start turning out 6.5 mm ones. This measure was meant to avoid the difficulty of building new production units¹².

General Joffre suggested to the British party that they should concentrate on delivering 7.7mm rifles. The leadership of the Ministry of Munitions deemed it possible, since the Imperial General Staff had diminished its orders for such equipment. When the rifle issue reached the War Committee, they feared that the Romanians might be under the impression that Great Britain supported Romania's

⁸ *Ibidem*, 4/3083, George Booth to Edwin Samuel Montague, Report from 19 October 1916.

⁹ *Ibidem*, Edwin Samuel Montague to David Lloyd George, Report from 25 October 1916.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 4/3095, W.T. Layton to W. Benson, Report from 22 November 1916.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, C.A.B., 23/1/3, *Conclusion former reference*, f.2, Report from 12 December 1916.

¹² *Ibidem*, W.O., 4/3091, George Booth to Duckam, Report from 1 December 1916.

war effort much less than France. This state of mind did not seem to influence the British government, yet, in case of refusal, they would have liked to present this refusal to the Romanian government as a decision of the Allies, not of the British party. This would have avoided even more suspicions regarding the London Cabinet.

Meanwhile, French minister of Armament Albert Thomas informed them that in late November France had delivered 60.000 rifles to Romania, while committing itself to further deliver 10.000/month. The London officials responsible for procurement considered these deliveries at least unsatisfactory.

W. Benson, director in the Ministry of Munitions and at the same time the person charged with supplying Russia, found out that the Romanian government was displeased with Cpt. Arion's activity in London, so he advised his direct boss, the Minister of Munitions Christopher Addison, to grant him an audience. On this occasion, the latter was to present a supply plan for Romania, meant to give hope for a considerable support from Great Britain to its ally that was in great difficulty at that moment¹³.

In October 1916, Cpt. Arion submitted a new list of demands to the Ministry of Munitions, asking for various types of shells. The British party requested some technical specifications, as well as drawings of the various projectiles necessary to the Romanian armed forces¹⁴. The answer of the Romanian officer was at least ambiguous, as he did not have the necessary qualifications to comply with the British request. However, he promised he would ask the Romanian government to provide the details requested by the British. Arion's hesitation created confusion in the Ministry and aroused the suspicions of the British party.

To better equip Romania, the British and the French governments co-operated by sharing the armament orders in keeping with their production and delivery capacities. After a new order submitted by Colonel Rudeanu, the British committed themselves to deliver equipment and the corresponding ammunition (105mm and 150mm howitzers, as well as 152 and 63mm Armstrong cannons). After the Treasury gave its approval, the production destined to the Romanian armed forces was scheduled to begin¹⁵.

In this period, Benson reported serious problems in his relation with Cpt. Nicolae Arion, Colonel Rudeanu's representative in London, who seemed to have no competence in technical issues, so that the British official asked for a Romanian artillery officer to replace him. Because of the disagreements between them, the British official requested cutting down on armament exports to Romania and suggested sending the same types of weapons that had been delivered to Russia, without taking into account the Romanian orders. Benson, who was also in charge

¹³ *Ibidem*, 4/3083, W. Benson to Edwin Samuel Montague, Report from 26 October 1916.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 4/3095, Trentham to McAlpine, Report from 21 October 1916.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 4/3083, W. Benson to Edwin Samuel Montague, Report from 21 November 1916

with the deliveries to Russia, proposed that Great Britain should not produce armament especially for the Romanians on a large scale. After an inside discussion in the Ministry of Munitions among George Benson, M. Booth and W.T. Layton¹⁶, the three of them agreed to Benson's point of view mentioned above.

We were deeply surprised to find in the British Archives a memorandum drawn up by George Benson, which clarified his attitude towards Romania. Here is what he stated in this document: „*I should like to report that Colonel Belaiev urged very strongly that under present circumstances [the defeats of 1916 and retreat in Moldova, a. n.] the Romanian Army will now be practically incorporated in the Russian Army, and that it was essential to concentrate all our efforts on unifying types of supply. He is much opposed to any effort being made to prepare ammunition for various types of Romanian guns*“¹⁷. Belaiev wanted the British government to further produce the same armament as up to that moment and to avoid turning out ammunition for lost or worn-out guns, such as the Romanian ones. Unfortunately, the British high official fully endorsed the Russian point of view on equipping and rearming Romania. Later on, the Russian point of view regarding the Kingdom of Romania became the rule in the London Ministry of Munitions, which created great trouble in the relation between the British and the Romanian governments.

After the withdrawal of the Romanian armed forces in Moldova and the discussions carried on in the presence of Col. Belaiev, detached by the Russian armed forces to the Romanian General Staff, the situation of Romania's equipping by the British became uncertain. In order to take a final decision, W.T. Layton (leader of the Department of Requirements and Statistics - D.M.R.S.) asked the French government for clarifications as to Paris's attitude regarding the Romanian requests of armament supplies¹⁸. One might say that this was the decision that saved the Romanian armed forces as a separate entity from the Russian ones. While the British had been willing to leave Romania at Russia's mercy, the French party started a steady action of supplying and equipping the Romanian soldiers.

At the end of 1916 the British government took several decisions: all armament orders placed by Romania were to be taken over by the French government, which analyzed the requests and, if British equipment was still necessary, it was the French who addressed Edwin Samuel Montague, Minister of Munitions. Any order placed directly by the Romanian government was to be refused unless first examined by the Paris Cabinet. This radical decision was taken at the British-French Conference for ammunition, which was held on 16 November 1916 in London. The meeting in the British capital was attended by Albert

¹⁶ Michail Dockrill, David French, *Strategy and Intelligence. British policy during the first World War*, The Hambledon Press, London, 1996, pg. 100-101

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 4/3091, G. Booth to W.T. Layton, Report from 1 December 1916.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 4/3091, W.T. Layton to George Booth, Report from 12 December.

Thomas, representing the French, Edwin Samuel Montague, as well as high officials from the British Ministry of Munitions.

The first issue tackled by Albert Thomas, during the debates of the Conference was that of supporting the Romanian war effort within the context of the fierce fights fought at that moment on Romania's territory. The French government official pointed out that the situation of the Romanian requests was very confusing. He had received orders from General Berthelot, from Russia, from Col. Rudeanu, as well as from the Romanian armed forces and other sources. As regarded the British government, the only request was that of Col. Rudeanu. After a first analysis, the Romanian officer handed the same list to both the French and the British governments¹⁹.

This meeting was meant to improve armament supplies to Romania and Italy. At the end of the debates the British government promised to supply 105mm shells. While debates were taking place in the British capital, the order had already been taken over by a British company. The liaison between the British and the French governments was ensured by W.T. Layton by means of the British military attaché in Paris²⁰. The above mentioned decisions were taken by Albert Thomas, the French minister of Armament, in agreement with Christopher Addison, his British counterpart. The orders submitted to the British party were to be supported by detailed technical specifications.

The French government wanted to send Romania, upon the latter's request, 152mm heavy field howitzers. They were already being produced in Britain but destined to the Russian armed forces. The French proposal was that half of the British howitzer production should be delivered to Romania. Christopher Addison considered that this proposal could not be implemented, as it risked increasing the tension between the Romanians and the Russians, since the latter were supposed to receive the ordered number of howitzers²¹. The problem was that the London and the Paris officials took it for granted that the Russian party would willingly share the so much needed Western equipment with its tiny ally, which in December 1916 was facing such great danger.

At the French-British Conference mentioned above it was decided that all Romanian orders should be submitted to the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement (C.I.R.), led by Wyldbore-Smith from the Ministry of Munitions. The French officials in this Commission analyzed the Romanian orders and, after confirming what the French war industry was able to produce, sent the remainder order to the London Ministry of Munitions. There were also financial problems, that was why it was deemed necessary that all Romanian requests should be addressed to C.I.R., which could analyze and coordinate more easily the supplies

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 5/141, *Conference with France and Italian Delegates*, London, 10 November, 1916.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 4/3083, W. Benson to W.T. Layton, Report from 30 December 1916.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 4/3208, Christopher Addison to David Lloyd George, Report from 11 December 1916.

for Romania, after solving the problems signaled by British Treasury, including the financial ones²².

As to the Romanian orders placed in the USA, they were presented to C.I.R. by Cpt. Arion. British sources state that the Romanian envoy to New York, Col. Adrian Miculescu, was well advanced in his negotiations with the American companies for 1.000.000 rifles and 2.000.000 cartridges. It is interesting to note the annoyance of the Ministry of Munitions officials, who considered that such negotiations made it difficult to supply armament to the other Allied governments that wanted to place orders in the USA. The British disapproval was communicated to Cpt. Arion, who did not seem to understand this complaint. The proposal of the Ministry of Munitions officials was to put pressure on Romania for reaching an agreement with Russia as to the military supplies in Europe or the North-American continent²³. The British party's annoyance was probably consequent upon Russia's discontent.

It was not the first time that the British government had a negative reaction to the Romanian armament orders placed in the USA. In 1916, in the period of neutrality, the materials bought by Romania from America, which were Romanian state property, were unloaded during their transportation by the British fleet and stored in British harbours. Besides ammunition, the British party also confiscated Miculescu's telegrams to Col. Rudeanu²⁴.

The Ministry of Munitions's officials considered that all Romanian armament orders to USA had to be cancelled and the Romanian needs that could be met on the North-American continent had to be re-directed to the French and British governments, who could negotiate with the Romanian government the orders meant for the USA.

In a note addressed to those in charge with supervising the shell factory, Prime Minister David Lloyd George claimed that neither Col. Rudeanu nor Cpt. Arion had the necessary technical knowledge to place the orders they needed. When Arion managed to receive the necessary information from Romania, the Romanian armed forces were already withdrawing. In the newly created situation, the British reached an agreement with the French Ministry of Armament, concluding that it was highly risky to supply the Kingdom of Romania with the requested shells, as they could be lost or used for worn-out weapons. Endorsing the opinion of the Ministry of Munitions, Lloyd George deemed that Romania had to be sent the same type of equipment as Russia²⁵.

The War Office representative to the Ministry of Munitions, Major Callwell, even suggested replacing the Romanian delegates charged with equipping the Romanian armed forces with British officers trained to this effect. However, as he

²² *Ibidem*, 4/3083, E. Wyldebone Smith to Christopher Addison, Report from 17 January 1917.

²³ *Ibidem*, Charles Hardinge to Christopher Addison, undated.

²⁴ General Vasile Rudeanu, *op.cit.*, pg. 207.

²⁵ TNA, MUN, 4/3083, David Lloyd George to W. Benson, Report from 17 January 1917.

himself declared, such persons were hard to find, since British officers ignored the equipment of the Romanian armed forces²⁶.

General Nivelles, the new commander of the French armed forces, announced in an audience granted to Col. Rudeanu that France and Great Britain committed to equip two Romanian divisions so as to have them ready for action as soon as possible²⁷.

In a report from February 1917, the British attitude was the same: all orders placed by the Romanian government, whether for ammunition or materials, were to be sent to the French government. The latter was to assume all financial responsibility for the Romanian requests, which could thus be met in France. The Romanian orders that could not be met in France were to be sent to the British government, who assumed financial responsibility for all orders placed on British territory. However, if exceptionally the French government wanted to place a Romanian order outside France, it was the Romanian government who assumed financial responsibility.

In keeping with the provisions of the London agreement, the British military attaché to Paris was informed by the French government that they wanted to submit to the Ministry of Munitions a list of equipment that could not be supplied to Romania by France. Moreover, the French mentioned they had tried to submit that list to the British government via the French military attaché in London, but without success. Anyway, from the British point of view, the situation was highly unsatisfactory²⁸.

Mention should be made that, after the agreement was signed by Albert Thomas and Christopher Addison, the British party was never informed by the French government as to the equipment needs of the Romanian armed forces, which increased the uncertainty of the London government. This situation made Romania's needs at least confusing for the British, but one cannot help noticing that the main persons responsible for this were the British themselves, as they had refused a direct dialogue with the Romanian negotiators. In early March 1917 Nicolae Mișu signed an agreement with the French and the British representatives regarding a collective coordination for supporting the Romanian war effort. All in all, the agreement observed the understanding between Thomas and Addison, but the Romanian minister in London hoped he would thus solve the huge procurement problems Romania was facing.

At the end of March 1917 the Romanian government informed the Department of Munitions Requirements and Statistics (D.M.R.S.) that the procurement operation via Russia was done with great difficulty and endless delay. The Romanian party suggested that the trains for Romania should be painted in the

²⁶ *Ibidem*, C.A.B, 23/1, *Conclusion Former Reference*, W.C. 3, f. 3, Major Callwell to War Office, 16 December 1916.

²⁷ General Vasile Rudeanu, *op.cit.*, pg. 353.

²⁸ TNA, MUN, 4/3095, Major General Charles Callwell to Christopher Addison, Report from 20 February 1917.

traditional Romanian colours - red, yellow and blue - besides the usual ones.²⁹ The British party accepted the suggestion. Thus, it was hoped to lessen traffic on the tsarist railways, which were not able to face the amount of cargo necessary for supporting the Eastern front.

In the same period the Romanian government requested cargo ships³⁰, as Romania had only three ships that could transport the ordered weapons.

With reference to the transportation on Russian territory, the British officials doubted that the Romanians were able to pick up their orders from the Russians, but they declined competence in this issue³¹. Once the turmoil in Russia started, transportation became increasingly difficult and the Romanian government signaled this impediment, especially to Paris, but the Tsar's government had already lost actual executive power, especially across the vast Russian territory. It was planned that the transportation to and from Russia would be solved in the Inter-allied Conference of Petrograd, January-February 1917.

In the Inter-Allied Conference of Petrograd participated delegates from Great Britain (Major General Headlam and W.T. Layton), France (General Janin and Colonel Remond), Russia (General Belaiev, Grand Duke Serge Michailovich and General Babikov) and Italy (General Romei-Lonyhena and Commander Cavallero).

The main aim of the Inter-Allied Conference was to „examine Russia's needs, not only in point of artillery but also other ammunition, raw materials, agricultural machinery“³². Romania's needs were discussed only marginally, after debating the long series of Russian necessities.

The first decision regarding Romania established a reduction in the tonnage allotted to it in the Russian ports of Archangelsk and Vladivostok from 260.000 tons to 120.000 tons. In comparison, the accepted tonnage for the Russian government was 3.400.000 tons, even more if possible³³.

After the Petrograd Conference an agreement was reached between the British and the French governments as to the supplying schedule for the Romanian armed forces. The Romanian orders had to be submitted to the French government by the Head of the French military Mission in Romania, General Berthelot. Later on, the order that could not be met by the French was to be submitted to the British government.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 4/3083, D.G.I.M. to D.M.R.S., Report from 30 March 1917.

³⁰ General Vasile Rudeanu, *op.cit.*, pg. 367.

³¹ TNA, MUN, 4/3095, P. Phipps to Sainsbury, undated.

³² *Ibidem*, 4/386, *Conference of the Allies in Petrograd. January-February 1917*, f.1, Petrograd, Report drawn up in March 1917.

³³ TNA, MUN, 4/386, *Conference of the Allies in Petrograd. January-February 1917*, f. 5, Petrograd, W.T. Layton to Chistopher Addison, Report drawn up in February 1917.

In the new organizational chart of the Romanian armed forces, drawn up by General Berthelot, Great Britain was to supply Romania with 165 howitzers caliber 152mm, 105 howitzers caliber 114mm and 88 cannons caliber 105mm. The representatives of the British government considered this new organizational chart somehow extravagant, yet they did not officially express their opinion to the French representatives, who had created it. However, they objected to the artillery order. Since the Romanian armed forces occupied only a small area on the Eastern front, the artillery order was labeled as inadequate for their capacity. From the British government's perspective, if the Romanian orders were met, there would be some imbalance on the Eastern front, as the Romanian section was to have more artillery than the remainder of the Eastern front.

In a Report to Lord Milner, W. T. Layton mentioned that in Jassy there was some rumour that Great Britain was to supply 25 howitzers of 152mm caliber. The British official denied the information, which - in his opinion - must have been only a misunderstanding. Regarding the 152mm howitzers, the British government endorsed the Russian proposal, namely that the Romanian armed forces should be allotted the 32 cannons of 152mm delivered to Russia in 1916³⁴. Thus, it was preferred to deliver worn out weapons instead of new and efficient ones.

General Berthelot's request for 105mm cannons was flatly denied. Moreover, the reorganization and rearming chart drawn up by General Berthelot could not be implemented because the tonnage for Romania had been cut down. The British concluded, somehow relieved: „It is, therefore, evident that even if we could provide the howitzers asked for, it could only be at the expense of other munitions“³⁵.

The Inter-Allied Conference proposed an organizational plan for supplying Russia in many ways in 1917. Unfortunately, the problem of arming and reorganizing the Romanian armed forces was a secondary one, Romania's fighting capacity, especially its human resources, being highly undervalued after the disastrous campaign of 1916.

As the Romanians did not know about the decisions taken in Petrograd, they were still insisting in London on the 105mm howitzers. Despite W.T. Layton's refusal to start production and deliver artillery of the above mentioned caliber, the Ministry of Munitions officials kept trying to find solutions to produce these types of weapons. There are two explanations for this situation: either there were serious communication problems in the British Ministry or the Petrograd decision was changed for an unknown reason, not mentioned in the British documents. This situation lasted from the end of 1916 until March 1917.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, Report to lord Milner by the British members of subcommission on munitions, f. 13, Section H, Petrograd, John Headlam, W.T. Layton to Lord Milner Report from 3/16 February 1917.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

Nicolae Mișu intervened with David Lloyd George for delivering heavy artillery to the Romanian armed forces. The War Office denied this request on account of “the uncertain situation on the Eastern front, the Russian requests and the doubtful value of the Romanian armed forces”³⁶. The opinion of the British was that, for the time being, it was not recommendable to consider supporting Romania.

Albert Thomas intervened with Christopher Addison so that Great Britain would deliver to the Romanian party 3.000 shells caliber 105mm/week. The French official pointed out that France was not able to produce this ammunition³⁷.

After this intervention there was a discussion in Paris between Col. Browne, French Col. Dandelon and Col. Vasile Rudeanu, which led to an agreement in principle to deliver the Romanian armed forces the 105mm cannons and the necessary ammunition³⁸. The Romanian officer left to the British producer all details regarding the design of the new cannons. For him it was important to place the order and to obtain its delivery to the Romanian armed forces. Later on an order for 100.000 shells of 105mm was placed to the British company *Pelabon*, for the howitzers of the same caliber the Romanians already possessed³⁹. It was esteemed that the British company could deliver 8.000 pieces in May, 20.000 in June and 40.000 in July. Finally, the British party understood the needs and the despair of the Romanian government and initiated a collaboration. It was a start.

Colonel de Panouse, the French military attaché to the Royal General Staff in London, intervened on behalf of Albert Thomas for the delivery of material for the Romanian heavy artillery⁴⁰. Even if there was some progress as regards the procurement of shells to the Romanian armed forces, the French Minister of Armament informed Albert Thomas about the difficulties faced by Great Britain in obtaining 152mm howitzers and suggested delivering French artillery pieces, which had shorter range but at least could be sent to the Romanian troops⁴¹.

The work of reorganizing and arming the Romanian armed forces carried on by the French Military Mission in Jassy bore fruit for the first time in the late spring of 1917, when Albert Thomas watched the parade of a whole artillery division, with 75mm and 105mm howitzers that used the long expected shells from Great Britain. It was for the first time since the beginning of the war that the unit was fully equipped.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, C.A.B., 23/2, *Conclusion Former Reference*, W.C. 113, f. 5, London, meeting of 4 April 1917.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, MUN, 4/3084, Albert Thomas to Christopher Addison, Paris, 17 February 1917.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, colonelul Brown to Edward Layton, Report from 24 March 1917.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, Report from 5 March 1917.

⁴⁰ General Henry Berthelot, *Memorii și corespondență 1916-1919*, Edit. Militară, Bucharest, 2012, pg. 172.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pg. 178.

In July 1917 the London Cabinet was carrying out a procrastination policy regarding the Romanian requests. It wanted to convince the Russian authorities of the necessity of giving up some weapons in favour of the Romanian armed forces, with the promise of being sent similar equipment in exchange, delivered by the British at a later date. Except the 20 Sopwith planes already delivered, the British government considered they could do nothing else to help Romania⁴².

After the fights from the summer of 1917, the British wanted to transfer 4000 shells caliber 152mm from Russia to Romania⁴³. This operation seemed very difficult, given the situation in this country. It was too late, all was already lost. The epilogue was on 19 October 1917, six days before the Bolsheviks took over the power in Russia. At that point, all transports of armament and other materials to Russia were temporarily cancelled by the British government. The products that were ready for delivery were directed to other Allied armed forces, such as the Belgian ones⁴⁴.

The War Cabinet summoned on 30 November 1917 confirmed the reports of the Ministry of Munitions. The armament delivery to Romania and Russia was cancelled because of the new political situation in Russia. Moreover, the production of military equipment for this country was also cancelled. What was already being produced in Great Britain and the USA was to be used by the British armed forces or other Allies. The same was decided regarding the Romanian howitzer orders⁴⁵. Once the political change started expanding over the territory of the Russian Empire, Romania was abandoned by the British ally for good.

The British-Romanian collaboration for equipping the Romanian armed forces with modern armament was a failure from all points of view. The causes of this failure are numerous: the incompetence of the Romanian representatives sent to London to negotiate the acquisitions; the ominous influence of General Belaiev, who persuaded the British that it was useless to supply the Romanian armed forces, since they were to be integrated in the Russian ones; the preconceived ideas of the Ministry of Munitions from London, which preferred to supply Romania via Russia, leaving the former at the latter's mercy; Romania was saved by the French government, which assumed the task of supplying and re-equipping the Romanian armed forces.

⁴² TNA, C.A.B., 23/3, *Conclusion Former Reference*, WC 173, f. 4, London, meeting of 2 July 1917.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, MUN, 4/3091, E. Carey to Wyldbore-Smith, London, Report from 14 August 1917.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, E. Carey către R/G.N.C., Report from 12 December 1917.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, C.A.B., 23/3, *Conclusion Former Reference*, WC 288, f. 3, meeting of 30 November 1917.