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ILO'S MULTILATERALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM DILEMMAS OF THE EARLY 1920S: A LOOK AT ROMANIA'S TRIPARTITE DELEGATIONS

Dan-Alexandru Săvoaia

Abstract

This article addresses some of the dilemmas that arose from Romania's status as a founding member of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It analyses the Romanian governmental elites' accommodation of the tripartite approach in the larger context of the multilateral diplomacy enshrined in the Peace Treaties following the First World War. In this sense, the article addresses issues of governmentality and representation by looking at the Romanian elites from the angle of structuration (A. Giddens). In an attempt to fill a gap between different strands of historiographies, it builds on the accounts of a historian who was a part of the discussions concerning labour issues at the Paris Peace Conference, while also bringing into the spotlight previously unpublished archival material from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Keywords: social reform, multilateral diplomacy, Greater Romania, International Labor Organization, tripartism

1. Introduction

Although the history of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is easily overlooked outside circles dealing with the history of international institutions and organisations, especially when seen through the prism of the League of Nations' failure, the history of the organisation and the people who were part of its events and mechanisms can be fascinating for exploring not only mentalities of the era, but also for interrogating the nature of the social structures intended to be represented. In spite of an increasingly rich historiography on the subject at international level¹, the development of analyses concerning international-national interaction,

especially in the Romanian case, is still pending. The starting points for fresh research forays in new interpretive palettes are, on the one hand, the agricultural sector, as the dominant tonality of interwar economic structures, and the working class, on the other hand, as the identity construct that has experienced numerous abuses and justifications both in Romanian post-war political practice and especially in the light of Romanian historiographical discourse from 1948 until 1989.

Tripartism² heralded a wider participation in drafting international conventions and recommendations, but also encouraged transfer of knowledge for law-making and their subsequent implementation at national level, through appropriation of aspects from other national cases, requiring adaptation to local realities. In all these respects, the participation of experts, whether from professional fields, law, economics, and even diplomatic circles, were faced with such tasks, requiring a concentrated effort. As such, my article looks at tripartism as means to reflect on the concept of representation, since Romania's interaction with the ILO can be seen as part of a larger project of a state-building process in the context of post-imperial realities. But in order to do so, we must first try to consider the complex and particular social structure and historical context from which these actors emerged, as well as the background of those who would be called to speak on behalf of one professional category or another, thus revealing a relevant image of the economic and social structures of the period.

2. ILO's precursors and the labour issue during and after the Paris Peace Conference (1919)

The public character of multilateral diplomacy promoted by the American side, and materialized, in the case of the ILO, through the tripartite structure of both the permanent body set up in 1919 and the annual international meetings (that continue to this day), was not necessarily unforeseen at the time. The reformist trade union activists, politicians and statesmen of the victorious powers who met in Paris to deal with labour issues were brought together by the fears generated by the Bolshevik revolution, and also by the common ideas and experiences they had acquired as participants, members or delegates in various forms of international collaboration since the end of the 19th century. One such example is the International Association for Labour Law (IALL), created in 1900, which served as an

epistemic community³, bringing together leading figures such as Malcolm Delevingne (in charge with factory inspection in the British Home Office), Arthur Fontaine (French engineer and mine inspector) and Ernest Mahaim (Belgian law specialist and professor at the University of Liège).

After resulting from the preliminary actions of national committees in Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland, the association received in 1901 the support of the Swiss government and the city of Basel, where the International Labor Office was to be set up and be headed by the economist Stefan Bauer (1865-1934). Although it initially aimed to keep track of the progress of national social legislation and to publish this data in aggregate form, the work of the organisation went much further than that, as it chose to select limited subjects and study them in depth – an approach facilitated by the 15 national sections that took shape in the following years to study the issues on the agenda, to carry out the necessary research and consultations in their own countries and finally to report the results to the general assembly⁴.

It is worth noting that some governments concluded international labour treaties during this period. At bilateral level, the earliest of these was the Franco-Italian treaty of 15 April 1904, whose main negotiators, Luigi Luzzatti, the Italian Minister of Finance, and Arthur Fontaine, the French Director of Labour, were close to IALL. From a multilateral perspective, an example of the incipient attempts to apply these principles was the Berne Labour Conference (1906), which marked the beginning of a system then replicated between 1913 and 1914, interrupted by the war, and resumed especially after 1919: the organisation of a preliminary conference that laid the foundations for draft conventions which would be submitted for consultation to each government. Thus, in 1906, professional diplomats drafted the first multilateral conventions on labour relations, the first of which banned the employment of women during the night, covering some one million women in 12 industrial countries in Europe, and dealing with an important element in worker protection, namely the length of working hours⁵.

Although the major trade union organisations viewed the work of the association with congeniality, the association was treated with relative reluctance, as it was perceived to be populated by middle-class reformers sympathetic to the working classes. In any case, in September 1914, the American Federation of Labour adopted in Philadelphia a resolution calling for a meeting of representatives of organized trade unions from

different countries in connection with the forthcoming Peace Conference. Reaffirmed in San Francisco in 1915 and in Baltimore in 1916, it was forwarded to all the main trade union organisations, and was followed in the same year by the Inter-Allied Conference of Trade Unions, which met in Leeds on July 5th 1916, and which was equally resolute in its demands, reiterating the hope that the Peace Treaties would draw a minimum of guarantees for the working classes beyond any danger from external competition⁶. Similar resolutions were adopted at successive workers' congresses in 1917 and 1918, both in the Allied countries and in those of the neutral and Central Powers, thus signalling that the organized trade union movement had come to regard the advancement of labour legislation as a method for organizing peace.

According to James Shotwell, the Commission on Labour Legislation at the Paris Peace Conference was called upon to do pioneer work, to draw up plans for an organisation unparalleled in the history of politics up to that time, which, without interfering in the sphere of government of sovereign states, had nevertheless to serve in coordinating world public opinion on matters of common concern, through draft treaties and recommendations, and to sketch up a program of reform which would secure higher standards of social justice throughout the world⁷.

At the proposition of President Woodrow Wilson, on January 25th 1919 a special commission was appointed, composed of two representatives from each of the five great powers – the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan – and five representatives chosen by the other powers represented at the Peace Conference, which decided that their representation should consist of two representatives from Belgium and one each from Cuba, Poland and Czechoslovakia. They were entrusted to “examine labour conditions from the international point of view, to consider the international means necessary to secure common action on problems affecting labour conditions, and to recommend the form of a permanent agency to carry on this investigation and analysis in cooperation with and under the direction of the League of Nations”. Commission members included Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor, and trade unionist Léon Jouhaux, who was the secretary-general of the French General Confederation of Labour. Moreover, the head of the British delegation, George N. Barnes, was a former trade union leader⁸.

In order to find a solution to the fundamental problem of reconciling trade union demands with the practical possibilities of the time, the

commission took as a basis for discussion a comprehensive plan for an international labour organisation presented by the British delegation and whose principal authors were two future directors of the ILO: Harold B. Butler and Edward Phelan. The main features of the British plan were the direct representation of employers' and workers' organisations in the official international body and the provision that this organisation would adopt conventions or treaties which member states would be obliged to submit to their parliaments for adoption or rejection within a set time limit⁹.

At the time of the Peace Conference, few people knew, apart from those who were actually in charge of this task, what the Commission on International Labour Law was all about. Initially, the work of the commission was to organize 18 meetings between 1 and 18 February, finalizing the first reading of the British draft (presented as a basis for discussion). After a period during which the governments were informed of the preliminary results, 17 further meetings were organized between 10 and 24 March, aiming at a second reading and the negotiation of various amendments¹⁰. By presenting its final report (drafted by H. Butler) in front of the Plenary Peace Conference, the Commission on International Labour Legislation hoped to attract the attention of the Versailles diplomats, government leaders, and the world press. By early April 1919, however, the negotiators' attention was focused almost exclusively on political issues, such as territorial reorganizations, and they paid little attention to an international social agreement.

Eventually, the ILO Constitution was adopted, after much preliminary work, at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, as Part XIII of the Peace Treaties signed by the Allied Powers at Versailles with Germany (June 28th 1919), at St. Germain-en-Laye with Austria, at Neuilly with Bulgaria and at the Trianon Palace with Hungary. The inclusion of the section on labour in each of these documents reflected the belief that universal peace could only be established if based on social justice.

In the autumn of the same year, between October 29th and November 29th, the first session of the International Labour Conference was held in the Pan American Building in Washington, USA, following Woodrow Wilson's acceptance of the invitation extended as early as April 1919 during the Peace Conference. On this occasion, the constitutional ideas and mechanisms for achieving the aspirations embodied in Part XIII of the Treaties were put to their first practical test. The organizing committee decided to draw up a provisional list of the principal industrial States, classified according to the level of industrial development, the motive

power employed, the length of railways per thousand square miles, and the level of foreign trade. As a result, the committee proposed that the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Japan and Switzerland to be considered as the eight countries of major industrial importance. Within the same framework, the first session of the Administrative Council elected by the Conference appointed Albert Thomas as the first Director of the Bureau, who in turn appointed Harold Butler as his deputy and Edward Phelan as Head of the Diplomatic Division, figures who would come to shape the organisation's fortunes in the years that followed.

3. The labour issue and Romanian aspects

While the Labour Commission of the Peace conference was negotiating the framing of labour terms for the Peace Treaties, such aspects were not on the radar of Romanian prime-minister, Ion I. C. Brătianu, whose reluctance towards the new type of diplomacy was observed by other attendees¹¹. Seeking to obtain the international recognition of the union acts of 1918, his main priorities revolved around the Romanian-Hungarian disputes, the oil resources and the minority question. In general terms, aspects of labour relations had previously only been marginal in the Romanian political arena, and when they did come forward, they usually tended to be treated in the same paternalistic take as in previous periods.

In this sense, the discussion on the tripartite framework accommodation in the period, while animated by a governmentality (M. Foucault) lens, has to take into account both the larger process of democratization Romania was undergoing at the time. Nevertheless, in the same spirit of promises to improve living conditions made by the French and British governments in the context of the First World War, King Ferdinand I also made various commitments after the events of February 1917, but also for the morale of those fighting on the front. Projected in the spring-summer of 1917 and legislated in 1918 and 1921, universal male suffrage and agrarian reform that would favour peasant land ownership were perceptions of fundamental transformations for millions of citizens. Moreover, the Declaration of Alba Iulia of December 1st 1918, which enshrined the unification of Transylvania with Romania, highlighted, among other things, that the industrial workers would be guaranteed the same rights

and benefits that were legislated in the most advanced industrial states in the West.

“It is a remarkable fact, however, that the problems of wage earners and craftsmen were still confused for some time, which may be explained on the one hand by the relics of a still recent past, and on the other by the progressive prolétarianisation of the artisans”¹²

The above quotation is extracted from a 1928 material devoted to Romania, as a part of a larger project of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation aimed at studying the national legislation relating to trade unions and administrative practice, as well as actual positions of trade unions in various countries. In a bit over 40 pages, the material signed by Romanian jurist George Z. Strat¹³ gives a nuanced account of the history of guilds and the trade union movement in Romania, their legal status at the time, along with several timeless insights into the limits and opportunities of trade union action in mid 1920s Romania. It also stands as a clear representation of the context and the dilemmas that foreshadowed Romania’s status as a founding member of the ILO in 1919 and its subsequent participation in the annual conferences.

Any discussion about the prospect of a labour question in post-First World War Romania must take into account that it dwarfs in dimension when compared to the agrarian one¹⁴, which remained a large societal and economical issue to be addressed by the political elites. Nevertheless, it transpires as a topic that arises as a result of two major pressure strands, which need a certain delineation.

On the one side, there were the revolutionary views, diffused in nature, but highly problematic when crises occurred (such as strikes), as these were often instrumentalized in crystallizations of maximal requests that would transpire as antinomic views towards the newly established Romanian State and its rulership. In this sense, the Romanian socialist political sphere remained divided, the articulation and the nationalisation of the social question further reflecting the tensions between revolutionary aims and reformist practices¹⁵. Despite the transformation process which some socialists had undergone since the end of the 19th century, steering from staunch internationalists to increasingly seeing themselves as „the better nationalists”¹⁶, the maximalist factions perceived the post-1918 Romanian state as an imperialist project and did little to consolidate their position in the power circles, but rather sought a complete overthrow.

In the new democratised milieu, the 7 representatives elected in the Romanian Parliament in November 1919 or the 20 that came about in the new round of elections organised in March 1920¹⁷, which could both count as signs of a growing electorate, failed to significantly contribute towards a party consolidation for Romanian socialists. This was further entangled by Marshall Alexandru Averescu' installation as prime minister on March 13th 1920, replacing Al. Vaida Voievod, who was tasked to take all the necessary measures to quell the revolutionary impetus and to „restore the order”, signalling once more the anti-Bolshevism as a mantra of day-to-day politics¹⁸.

On the other side, there were the provisions of Part XIII of the Paris Peace Treaties, which called for a new era in the international sphere for setting labour relations, based on a common understanding; an era to be established from that moment forward, not only between governmental representatives, or various individual initiatives, but in a way which would bring at the same table employers and employees delegates too. Both these strands hinted towards the need of a standard setting and a delineation of rights and duties based on constant negotiations and accords, which would not be limited to the national level, but would have a strong international dimension, since their interdependency could not be overlooked.

In the context of the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, Take Ionescu, Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time, in an explanatory statement in the Romanian Senate portrayed the 41 articles of Part XIII (art. 387- 428) as follows:

“This regulates labour as uniformly as possible; it specifies how the relations between workers and employers are to be regulated by the permanent organisation of the General Conference of Labour and the BIM, how representatives of labour and employers are to be included in their composition; how, finally, the whole and great problem of labour shall be settled as uniformly as possible in all countries, and therefore in our own, so that universal harmony between these two classes may be brought about. (...) Once our country has accepted all these measures, by signing the treaty on July 7, 1919, it has thereby resolved in principle the fate of the workers in our country, their actual legal organisation, to follow as soon as possible. This confirms once more that all the concern of the Western states, in agreement with our governments, is due to the most humane settlement of these great problems, and that the deliberate and subversive speculations in the East are only taking advantage, without any

chance of success, of the ignorance of an equal labour regime to which the Romanian government has adhered for more than eight months”¹⁹.

Although my research does not focus on voices that postulated social reform along various socialist lines, which were divided between „reformists” and „revolutionaries” labels that are difficult to discern, I do not mean to overlook their input in promoting and maintaining in the public sphere issues that asked for solutions, especially in the context of Romania’s state-building process. Rather, I am referring to what was proposed as a topic for discussion within the sphere of the ILO and the way these matters were perceived by the Romanian political elites.

Since even having a clear definition of the *worker* proved difficult in the period, I am looking at the interaction between Romania and the ILO not so much through the prism of an attempt to quantify the impact of international labour standards, but rather through that of a reflection on Romanian society, starting from the way the elites perceived the issue of labour relations. Although it has both a generalising and reductive meaning, we refer to the category of elites insofar as their position or training involves being actors within an *establishment* which is alive, understood through the logic of Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory and the interdependent relationship between agency, actors and group recognition²⁰.

Building on the idea of structuration, it is necessary to recall two major legislative novelties that Romania witnessed in the period, namely the Law regulating collective labour disputes (1920)²¹, that introduced the practice of conciliation and arbitration, which, as Gr. Trancu-Iași recalled in one of his courses a few years later, “from a practical point of view, in light of the circumstances in which the country found itself at that time, we were obliged, under the threat of anarchy taking over our entire economic life, to initiate these laws and to guarantee first of all the freedom of labour”²², and the Trade Union Act of 1921²³, which was designed to put trade union action on a legalistic footing, so that these organisations became, at least in theory, recognisable to the government in power as possible partners in the relationship between the state and the people.

According to Treaty of Versailles provisions, although governmental delegates at the annual International Labour Conferences did not enjoy plenipotentiary status, which would legally bind their own government, they participated as members of an assembly similar to a parliament, and their signatures (or votes)²⁴ bore a moral weight on their own government’s

actions. As such, our research highlights the provisions of Art. 399 of the Versailles Treaty, which stipulated that each government attending the Conference had to cover the expenses for its four delegates and their technical advisers, a theme that became a recurring one over the years in the Romanian case.

As for the delegates of the most representative professional organisations (Art. 389), interwar jurist Marco Barasch²⁵ assessed that this aspect was introduced to stimulate the development of professional organisations where they did not exist, the expected presence of delegates at the annual conferences becoming in itself a contribution to the overall organisational effort²⁶. Our research is thus animated by the attempt to explore the causalities of an image outlined by Romanian historian Alexandru-Murad Mironov concerning interwar Romania, who has previously assessed that in the period in question, the labour regime was not modified by social pressure, but rather by political initiative, ideology of the government in power or by the personality of the incumbent at the Ministry of Labour²⁷.

4. The long road towards a full Romanian tripartite delegation (1919-1924)

In preparation for the participation at the First International Labour Conference, to be organized in Washington in October 1919, the Director of the Romanian Central Social Insurance House, Alexandru V. Gâdei, inquired the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whether Romania had ratified the two Berne Conventions of 1906 on white phosphorus in the matches industry²⁸ and on the night work by women, also asking for clarification on the Berne Convention of 1913 on the protection of young workers and their night work²⁹. The request is not surprising, since, on multiple accounts, even from the late 19th century, Romania had been invited to participate in various international reunions concerning industrial work regulation, work accidents, insurance and other similar arrangements. While some were individual initiatives and others had governmental backing, they were all declined most of the time by the Romanian part, the conference proceedings being occasionally observed from afar.

Back to the Washington Conference, the invitation from August 20th 1919 was addressed by the American President to the Head of the Romanian Council of Ministers, Ion I. C. Brătianu, and was dispatched through the American Legation to Bucharest. Although initially the Ministry

of Industry and Commerce announced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it would not send a delegate to represent the Romanian government at the Conference³⁰, Constantin Orghidan, chief engineer and sub-director of the special service of the CFR workshops³¹, was informed by the Romanian Legation in Washington on October 15th 1919 of his appointment as a delegate to this event³². He was to be accompanied by commercial attaché Gr. Mihăescu, with whom he was now to attend both the Atlantic City Trade Congress³³ on October 22nd and the Washington Labour Conference on November 29th ³⁴.

Orghidan's situation seems uncertain in the archival documents, as he had already been delegated by the Romanian War Ministry to the United States, in New York. Afterwards, when he subsequently tried to obtain reimbursement for his travel expenses from the Ministry of Industry, the latter did not seem to recognize his status as a delegate³⁵. In his attempt, Orghidan emphasised that his work on the labour issue had not been in vain, since thanks to his involvement and that of Gr. Mihăescu, Romania became "the only country in Europe that has the right, if it wants to work more than 8 hours a day for 3 years after July 1st 1921"³⁶. In this regard, Gr. Trancu-Iași, in his course at the Superior School of State Sciences from a few years later, detailed that the argument of the Romanian side in this matter was based on the destruction suffered by the country during the war and the need for economic recovery³⁷.

Nevertheless, Romania took account of all the 6 conventions adopted at the 1919 Conference. As a follow-up on these, in view of the inquiry made by the Dutch Legation in Bucharest, based on Art. 405 of Versailles Treaty, regarding the ways in which Romania was to legislate the spirit of the Washington Conventions³⁸, the Ministry of Labour answered that the conventions in question were to be submitted for ratification by the legislatures within the prescribed time limit, while on the question of the recommendations adopted "we shall endeavour, taking into account the economic and social conditions, to transform them into positive provisions by means of ministerial decisions"³⁹. In this regard, in the explanatory memorandum attached to the ratification by the Romanian Parliament of the results of the Washington Conference, Grigore Trancu-Iași, the first Minister of Labour, examined each convention individually, (erroneously) boasting that Romania was the first state to ratify the Washington Convention, thanks to his involvement⁴⁰.

After the first Conference in November 1919, the next one to follow was devoted to Maritime Affairs and was scheduled to begin on June 15th

1920. In this context, Albert Thomas insisted towards the Romanian side to communicate him in due time the names of those who would make up the delegation⁴¹. The documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also reveal his concern for the filling of the questionnaire attached to the provisional conference programme. As part of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Commission for the Application of Treaties addressed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, announcing that it was “absolutely necessary to set up a special delegation composed of delegates from the Ministry of Public Works and Labour, together with a delegate of the shipowners and personnel embarked on merchant ships under the Romanian flag in the ports, to study the questions concerning the organisation of work, in order to be able to formulate informed answers” to the questionnaire received from the ILO director. In this regard, interventions were made with the ministers and also with the Prefectures of Brăila and Covurlui counties⁴².

The constitution of the delegation was achieved by mobilising resources from the newly established Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the prefectures in the territory. One of the first names to be drawn was Emil Enescu, an engineer and director of the Romanian Shipping Company, who had been elected for this purpose by the shipowners of the port of Brăila in the office of the captaincy. As for the sailors’ delegate, the same captaincy informed Bucharest that no one had been elected, in the absence of a direct order from the workers’ union central office in Bucharest⁴³. In any case, the delegates elected in Brăila were to meet later in Bucharest with those still to be named from the other Romanian port cities (Galați and Constanța)⁴⁴, who “in addition to special knowledge of the resolution of this important problem, should also know French in order to participate usefully in the work of the Conference”⁴⁵.

Eventually, according to documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian delegation to Genoa was to be formed by the following delegated or elected members: Commander Ionescu-Zaharia, recommended by the Ministry of Labour, Commander Adam Jijie⁴⁶, delegate of the Seamen’s Union, Captain Emil Enescu, elected by the shipowners, Captain Ioan Semenescu, delegate of the Ministry of Public Works, two delegates of the seamen (Simon Novak and a mechanic named Nedelcu), together with mechanic Filip, also from the Ministry of Public Works, but the final decision was up to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁴⁷. However, of the 7 appointed, only 5 made it in the notification to the Romanian Legation in Rome concerning the conference delegation⁴⁸. Furthermore, the members had some problems on their way to Genoa,

since their route was cut short due to flooding and the suspension of rail transport. Mysteriously, the final number of delegates that made it to the event came down to 4⁴⁹.

In any case, a memo of the Board of Directors of the General Seamen's Union, which arrived belatedly at the Treaties Commission, records the proceedings of a special meeting that took place on May 14th 1920 and chaired by Commander Adam Jijie, at which the questionnaire provided by the Ministry of Labour had been discussed in agreement with Engineer Commander Enescu, the shipowners' representative, and I. Semenescu, captain under-inspector. According to the document, it had been decided to adhere without restrictions to the convention on the limitation of seafarers' working hours to 8 hours a day, while various comments were made on the topics of the conference. We do not know whether those agreed upon were taken up to Genoa by those who formed the final delegation to the event, but the report itself was filed at the Foreign Ministry's central office. Nonetheless, the criteria used for selecting the members of the delegations were bound to stir discontent, according to internal correspondence of the Ministry of Labour⁵⁰.

The proceedings of the Genoa Conference concluded with three Conventions on the admission of children to maritime labour, placement of seafarers and unemployment benefits in the event of loss or shipwreck, on which the Ministry of Labour commented⁵¹: "we will present a bill for the ratification of some of them, after first seeing what actions other States are taking, since so far only a few have decided to ratify them". While the Ministry of Communications came out in favour of the application of the three conventions, the recommendations, since they did not have a binding status, were considered to be contrary to the agreements of the Barcelona Conference⁵², where the General Convention for the Freedom of Inland Waterway Transport had been established, and to the principles upheld by the Romanian State at the Danube Statute Conferences⁵³. At the same time, the Ministry of Labour, following consultations with various maritime organisations, took a more reserved position, deciding in favour for the ratification of only one convention, that on the minimum age for the admission of children to maritime labour; since the opinions on the other two were divided, they were to be submitted to the ministerial committees responsible for drawing up a draft labour code⁵⁴ for consideration, and the committees would then act on their opinion when drawing up the preliminary draft labour code, taking into account the recommendations

adopted in Genoa, "in so far as their provisions are applicable in our country"⁵⁵.

While in the case of maritime issues the question of representation found its adaptation, as it focused on three port cities in Romania, the issue of a general workers representation at national level remained a thorny one. In a reply to an inquiry on Art. 412⁵⁶ concerning the nomination of delegates for a potential commission of inquiry to the ILO Governing Body, the Romanian Ministry of Labour proposed that employers' interests be represented by Ștefan Cerkez, industrialist, president of the General Union of Romania Industrialists (UGIR) and sociologist Dimitrie Gusti as a "neutral element". As for the employees' representative, it was noted that their appointment could not be made as

"...we could not yet make a decision, because their central professional organisation in the Old Kingdom (the General Commission of Trade Unions) refused, for principle reasons, any discussion on this matter. We are, however, awaiting the response of the central professional organisation of workers in Transylvania, which we suspect will be favourable to this collaboration (...) according to our information, a General Congress of Trade Union Organisations from the whole of the Kingdom will soon be held and we have every reason to hope that the new governing bodies will look with sympathy and confidence on the work built on the provisions of the Versailles Peace Treaty concerning Labour"⁵⁷.

A year later, in Geneva, in the context of the Third International Labour Conference, which focused, among other things, on the adaptation to the agricultural sector of the Washington resolutions on hours of work, the Labour Minister concluded in the questionnaire sent by the ILO that "we are of the opinion that it should be left to each country to draw up the questionnaire according to local conditions and needs. In a country of small peasant owners, such as ours, where agricultural work is generally done by members of the same family, it is almost impossible to arrange working hours"⁵⁸.

The structure of the delegation, as shown in the correspondence between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, remained minimal:

"...due to financial difficulties, the Ministry of Labour is obliged to abandon the sending of a delegation as it would have wished. If, however, you consider that, from the point of view of the application of the Treaty of

Versailles, our country should have a delegate, then the Ministry consents to Mr Demetre Iancovici's appointment, who is also Romania's technical delegate to the League of Nations"⁵⁹.

From this position, the government delegate stated during the event that agricultural concerns were Romania's first priorities:

"...we hope to extract from Romanian soil the necessary means and possibilities for increasing our economic development and the increasingly visible, stronger consolidation of our social order – but this effort cannot be the act of a single country and that is why we are following with close attention the international discussion of the problem in all its extent. Romania has put forward the reasons why it believes that it is not opportune to consider limiting the duration of work in agriculture... It does not have a wage-earning class and it is also of the opinion that in the present state of precariousness in which the world economy finds itself, collective effort is not superfluous to attempt an increase in world agricultural production, the only factor to uplift states and peoples"⁶⁰.

In 1922, in the context of the International Labour Conference, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen⁶¹ was appointed to represent the Romanian government, and also received the approval to participate in a preliminary conference with delegates of the countries that formed the Little Entente, in order to discuss the issues to be dealt with at the Conference⁶², and approach them in similar vein⁶³.

The Romanian delegation at the Geneva Conference that year comprised of governmental delegates only, whose expenses had been approved by the Council of Ministers. This repeating pattern became a concern for the ILO director, and his dissatisfaction reached the ears of other Romanians involved in the activities of the League of Nations. Thus, in a telegram from the Romanian Legation in Paris from 11 October 1922, Elena Văcărescu⁶⁴ wrote: "Please arrange for two official Romanian delegates to be sent to the ILO Congress, which will be of the utmost importance for our country. The decisions taken will have a serious impact on the future of the labour organisations. We cannot remain aloof from the debates. Two other delegates need to be appointed, one by the workers, the other by the employers"⁶⁵.

The attitude of the Romanian government also sparked protests from the employees' organisation. As such, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was informed that Romulus Dan, from Chernivtsi, had published a letter in the

Austrian newspaper *Arbeiter Zeitung* from 7 December 1921, bearing the title 'Das Internationale Arbeitsamt und Rumänien', in which he protested for not having been included in the delegation, despite prior approval from the Ministry of Labour to his nomination by the trade union organisation⁶⁶. The message was in line with the complaints made by Belgian and Italian workers' delegates to the 1921 session of the International Conference about incomplete delegations (including Romania's), a situation which repeated itself in 1922 despite the protests. From the discussions between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, although it was initially envisaged to send delegates of employers and employees, it was finally decided against, "for governmental reasons"⁶⁷.

That year, as part of the conference, N. Petrescu-Comnen, also deputy and member of the Labour Legislation Commission back in Romania, while responding to what he considered to be „the malicious remarks of detractors”, who were presenting Romania as a country of the reactionary, suggested to the Office to distribute its attention among the various countries „in a slightly more equitable manner, not focusing solely on their territorial or industrial importance, but also taking into account the concern they show for the working class, the efforts they make to improve the lot of workers, and the rise in their feelings of justice and social solidarity”⁶⁸.

In the same vein, Franciszek Sokal, a Polish governmental delegate, echoing the views of N. Petrescu-Comnen, along with those of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and Czechoslovakia, with which he had come to an agreement concerning the general comments on the work of the organisation, argued that the ILO had to continue its efforts in obtaining the ratification of the conventions which were passed, but also keep an eye on the obstacles in the way of ratification, and do all in its power to assist in removing them. Also, his solution with a look into the future focused on the need to increase the moral authority of the organisation in such a way as to put pressure on the governments to ratify the conference decisions, keeping a focus on the public opinion which was to be influenced, since it should not be permissible for one minister or under-secretary to impede ratification⁶⁹.

In 1923, the same N. Petrescu-Comnen, also Minister Plenipotentiary in Bern by then, announced to Bucharest that he had been elected by the representatives of the Little Entente at the Labour Conference as President of the three delegations⁷⁰ following a meeting which took place before the annual event. Seconded by I. Setlacec⁷¹ as technical adviser, N. Petrescu-Comnen was asked to explain the systematic lack of Romanian

workers' and employers' delegates, an action seen as being contrary to the Versailles Treaty provisions. In a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he stated that of the 500,000 workers in Romania, only 60,000 were organized, and that these were divided into many camps, a situation confirmed, in his views, by the fact that in August 1922, in Cluj, there was a big rumble between these groups, and as a result, election would have been contested, adding in his discourse that "the government could have camouflaged a pseudo (representative) but such a procedure, practiced by others, repelled them. Our liberalism could not have been suspected, proof of which is the considerable number of ratifications of conventions and the importance of labour, which constitute an enormous advance in universal labour legislation"⁷².

The year 1924 was one of transformations; following the efforts of the only Romanian official at the ILO, Arnold Stocker⁷³, to promote the work of the organisation within the country, the visit of the Romanian King to the ILO headquarters took place in May, and a similar gesture followed, as Director A. Thomas visited Romania in November – all of these heralding a significant improvement in Romania's relationship with the ILO. There were, however, also prospects of possible challenges, as the deferment obtained in 1919 was now to reach its expiration date, signalling the need for a law introducing the 8-hour working day.

Despite positive approaches, in the period leading to the annual Labour Conference of 1924, N. Petrescu-Comnen informed the Romanian Foreign Minister, I. G. Duca, that the ILO had learned that Romania, for the fourth time, was to send only government delegates to the event scheduled for June. Having been reminded in a friendly and discreet manner that the workers' delegates, led by Leon Jouhaux and Mertens, were prepared to make a vigorous demand for Romania not be admitted to the Conference, Comnen assessed the circumstance as a serious one, stressing the need for the Foreign Ministry to make the necessary interventions to the Ministry of Labour to send a full delegation and to avoid "exposing ourselves to the inconvenience of not being received at the Conference"⁷⁴.

One way or another, at the 1924 Conference Romania joined Argentine, Cuba, Greece, South Africa, as countries with complete tripartite delegations for the first time⁷⁵, receiving the praise of Arthur Fontaine, Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office⁷⁶. With this occasion, N. Petrescu-Comnen was appointed chairman and rapporteur for the credentials committee of the conference, which meant that now had insight into controversies and matters concerning the

representativity of those partaking the event. From this position he had to handle, among other things, the protests against the composition of the Italians workers delegation, in a problem which was not necessarily new, having occurred also one year prior. Although the committee sought to resolve the matter under the principle of *res judicata*, the workers group decided to vote against the validation of the credentials of the Italian workers representative⁷⁷.

Moreover, the question of representation proved to be much broader, other countries facing difficulties of other kinds than those of Romania's. Representation didn't prove to be an easy task, since there were quite a few protests, from the *Confederazione generale del Lavoro* against the Italian workers delegate, from *Odborowe Zdruzoni Ceskoslovensko of Prague* (Federation of Czechoslovak Trade Unions) and from the *Ceskoslovensko Obec Dolnicka* of Prague (Union of Czechoslovak Workers) against the Czechoslovak Workers delegate (nominated by the Christian Trade Unions from Brno)⁷⁸. While the Italian case raised disputes revolving around the defining aspects a most representative organisation, the Czechoslovak one expanded on membership numbers, economic power (assets) or the productive capacity of trade union organisations as criteria for representativity.

At the same time, Comnen's activity in the committee reveals greater issues about conference delegations. As for the incomplete delegations (which was the case for 16 countries), at committee's request, representatives of Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Portugal and Uruguay invoked the precarious financial situation of their countries, which, according to their statement, did not allow them to incur the somewhat heavy expense involved in sending a complete delegation to Geneva⁷⁹. Moreover, representatives of Albania, China, Lithuania, Siam and Uruguay pointed out that their incomplete delegations were due to a lack of employers' and workers' organisation within the meaning of Part XIII of the Versailles Treaty, while the Norwegian government explained their decision of not sending their workers' delegate due to the distrust, and even hostility of the workers associations towards the organisation. At the same time, in an even more striking account, the Estonian delegate pointed out the uselessness for small countries to send a too large delegation, given the preponderant influence wielded by the great Powers in the Conference and especially in the work of the Committees.

As such, at the proposal of the credentials committee, the Secretary-General of the Conference was requested to address an urgent

appeal to all the member governments, highlighting the inconveniences resulting from incomplete delegations and requesting them to be good enough to make every effort to carry out the obligations assumed as signatories of the Treaty of Versailles. These aspects were also called to attention by the Romanian workers delegate, Ioan Flueraș and the employers' delegate, Constantin R. Mircea, representing the General Union of Romanian Industrialists, who gave a lengthy account of his experience at the 1924 Conference in the official bulletin of the union complaining about the lack of previous representation, and stressing the dangers posed by labour laws adopted without prior consultation⁸⁰. A similar tone had been taken by UGIR even before the 1924 Conference; a confidential memo addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed for more involvement from the part of the government in the international aspects of labour legislation⁸¹.



Photo 1. Romanian delegation at the International Labor Conference, Geneva, 1925. 1 – Ioan Flueraș, 2 – Isabela Sadoveanu, 3 – Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, 4 – Constantin R. Mircea, 5 – I. Setlacec, 6 – Arnold Stocker, 7 – M. Enescu.

Source: ILO Historical Archives, Geneva

However, the support for this tripartite format proved to be inconsequential and subject to politicalist notes, the full format of the Romanian delegation being achieved again in 1925, but temporarily abandoned in 1926, when the episode was further complicated by poor communication between ministries⁸². From the perspective of the Romanian government, tripartism brought even further challenges, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was no longer the sole channel of communication with international organisms. This was hardly a new problem in 1926, the issue being raised in internal ministerial notes four years prior, according to a report addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which stated that the adherence to the Washington conventions and recommendations had been done “directly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, without the knowledge of the Department of Foreign Affairs, which was not informed until later, following the request addressed by the latter”⁸³. Back to the situation in 1926, Gr. Trancu-Iași, the Minister of Labour, justified that the delegation could not be complete due to the general elections that were in progress in the country, to N. Petrescu-Connen’s embarrassment at the conference, who served again as the government delegate at the event, but who was not informed of the situation, the message of the Romanian Minister of Labour having been transmitted directly to the International Labour Conference, and not through the Legation in Bern, as it had been done previously⁸⁴.

5. Conclusions

Initially, Romanian governments had failed to send complete tripartite delegations at the annual labour conferences, citing unfavourable financial situation, or fragmentation of labour organisations. These attitudes were hardly singular, as similar takes were shared by other states too. As Albert Thomas highlighted in his 1924 report as director of the ILO, the system of conferences faced the member states’ anxiety *vis-à-vis* their unimpaired national sovereignty combined with their competition in the economic sphere, which brought delicate political topics to be dealt with. The experience of forming tripartite delegations in the first half of the 1920s reveals a fracture in views: on the one hand, the economic dimension and the competition on the global market were seen as main drivers for some, on the other hand, the need for an equal states’ participation in ratifying international conventions and recommendations was perceived

as paramount. In between these, the governments were in a delicate position of formulating guarantees (through laws) for both employers and the employees, while also seeking their own administrative coherence.

In the Romanian case, Gr. Trancu-Iași⁸⁵, the first Ministry of Labour, promoted the ILO conventions and their ratification at national level, at the expense of consulting other parties, which was justified, like in other state cases, on the absence of representative organisation or insufficient funds required to cover the expenses of the delegations. The representation of the Romanian professional milieus however came slowly (for first time in 1924), a decision which owed some credit, at least in part, to the external and recurrent pressure from the ILO officials, but also to growing protests from employers and employees' representatives.

Endnotes

- ¹ The initial works of James T. Shotwell; Anthony Alcock; George Alexander Johnston; more recently: Isabelle Lespinet-Moret, Vincent Viet, *L'Organisation internationale du travail. Origine, développement, avenir*, (Presses Universitaires des Rennes, 2007); Sandrine Kott, 'Constructing a European Social Model: The Fight for Social Insurance in the Interwar Period'. In *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century*, edited by Jasmien van Daele, et. al, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010): 173–95; Véronique Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy: The ILO Contribution to Development (1930–1946)*. (De Gruyter, 2020); Guy Fiti Sinclair, *To Reform the World: International Organizations and The making of Modern States*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dorothea Hoehtker, 'L'OIT, les normes et l'histoire', *Revue internationale de droit économique* t. XXXIII, no. 4 (2019): 477–500; Daniel Maul. *The International Labour Organization: 100 Years of Global Social Policy*. (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2019).
- ² The interaction of government, employers and workers representatives as equal partners in finding solutions to issues of common concern.
- ³ Jasmine Van Daele, "Engineering social peace. Networks, ideas and the founding of the International Labour Organisation", *International Review of Social History* 50, (2005): 436.
- ⁴ Sandrine Kott, "From Transnational Reformist Network to International Organization. The International Association for Labour Legislation and the International Labour Organization, 1900–1930s", in *Shaping the Transnational Sphere, Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s*, eds. Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck, Jakob Vogel (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 239-241.
- ⁵ The other convention covered the ban of using white phosphorus in match industry. Ernest Mahaim, "The historical and social importance of international labor legislation", in *The origins of the International Labor Organization*, ed. James Shotwell, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 3-18.
- ⁶ Mahaim, "The historical", 18.
- ⁷ Shotwell, "Introduction", XX.
- ⁸ International Labour Office, "The Commission on International Labour Legislation", *Official Bulletin*, Vol.1 (Apr. 1919-Aug. 1920): 1-345, Geneva, ILO, 1923.
- ⁹ International Labour Office, "The Commission", 1-345.
- ¹⁰ Edward J. Phelan, "The commission on international labour legislation", in *Introduction*, ed. James Shotwell, in *The origins of the International Labor*

- Organization*, ed. James Shotwell, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 127-198.
- 11 See Harold Nicholson, *Peacemaking 1919*, first published in 1933, for example.
- 12 International Labour Organization, "Freedom of association", *Official Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 31, Geneva (1928): 365-405.
- 13 Born on Nov. 4, 1894, jurist George Z. Strat was a graduate in Law at the University of Iași (1919) and obtained his PhD in political science and economy from *Université de Paris* in 1923 with the thesis *Le rôle du consommateur dans l'économie moderne*.
- 14 Constantin Iodachi, "The agrarian question in Romania, 1744–1921", in *The Routledge Handbook of Balkan and Southeast European History*, eds. John R. Lampe, Ulf Brunnbauer (Routledge, 2020), 35-41; also, for a long-term perspective on the structure of the Romanian labour force see Bogdan Murgescu, "Agriculture and landownership in the economic history of twentieth-Century Romania", in *Property in East Central Europe. Notions, Institutions and Practices of Landownership in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Hannes Siegrist and Dietmar Müller (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 50.
- 15 Especially the third part of Cătălin Cotoi's book, *Inventing the Social in Romania, 1848–1914: Networks and Laboratories of Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2020) and mainly the second part of Adi Dohotaru's book, *Socialiștii. O moștenire (1835-1921)* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2019).
- 16 Anca Maria Mândru, "Nationalism as a national danger? Early Romanian socialists and the paradoxes of the national question (1880–1914)", *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 43:2, (2015): 319-336, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2014.973389.
- 17 Bogdan Murgesu, Andrei Florin Sora (coord.), *România Mare votează. Alegerile parlamentare din 1919 „la firul ierbii”*, (Iași: Polirom, 2019), 371-390.
- 18 In august 1919, the Romainan Army occupied Budapest and quashed Béla Kun's Bolshevik's project for Hungary.
- 19 "Monitorul Oficial", *Dezbaterile Senatului*, August 22, 1920, 617-618.
- 20 Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (California: University of California Press, 1984).
- 21 "Monitorul Oficial", September 5, 1920, 4239-4242.
- 22 Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească și cooperatistă* (București, 1928), 37.
- 23 "Monitorul Oficial", May 26, 1921, 1419-1425.
- 24 Marco Barasch, *Legislația internațională a muncii* (București, 1929), 63.
- 25 Romanian jurist with significant contributions to labour law in Romania in the period.

- 26 Barasch, *Legislația internațională*, 63.
- 27 Alexandru-Murad Mironov, "Grigore Trancu-Iași și 'protecția muncii naționale'. Politica socială interbelică între naționalism și combaterea șomajului" in *Revista Transilvania*, no. 10-11 (2014), p. 64-72.
- 28 This issue was also addressed in a recommendation of the Washington Conference, which Romania had ratified, thus committing itself to adhere to the 1906 Convention. See the Note of Ministry of Labour to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (henceforth MAS), no. 8501 from June 18, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (henceforth AMAE).
- 29 A. V. Gâdei's note to MAS, July 7, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 30 Letter from MAS, September 17, 1919, see also Telegram, Ministry of Industry and Commerce to Romania's Legation in Washington, no. 65276, December 29, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 31 Mentioned in other documents as chairman of the Romanian technical committee in the USA. Romania's Washington Legation's note to MAS, no. 2744.6, December 2, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 32 Romania's Washington Legation's note to C. Orghidan, no. 2886.13, October 15, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 33 The International Trade Conference in Atlantic City (1919) decided to establish the International Chamber of Commerce, an institution founded in 1920, based in Paris, with the aim of encouraging trade, investment and the free market economy.
- 34 Telegram for Romania's Washington Legation, October 11, 1919, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 35 C. Orghidan's report to the Minister of Industry, January 15, 1920, New York, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 36 Art. 13 of the First Convention adopted by the ILO in 1919 on the application of the principle of the 8-hours day or of the 48-hours week stipulates: „In the application of this Convention to Rumania the date at which its provisions shall be brought into operation in accordance with Article 19 may be extended to not later than 1 July 1924". C. Orghidan note to MAS, no. 191230, May 28, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 37 Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească*, 22.
- 38 Letter no. 927 to MAS, October 12, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 39 Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 9080, November 11, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 40 "Monitorul Oficial", May 17, 1921. Romania was in fact the second country after Greece to register with ILO the ratification of the 7 Conventions adopted

- at the Washington Conference. Greece did it on November 19, 1920, unlike Romania, which did so on June 13, 1921. See also International Labour Office, *Records of proceedings of the International Labour Conference*, Fifth session 22-29 October, Geneva, (1923), 360-372.
- 41 Albert Thomas' letter to MAS, February 26, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 42 Letter no. 172, April 30, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 43 Letter no. 202, May 8, 1920 and the copy of Telegram no. 1150, addressed to Eftimie Antonescu, General Commissioner for the Application of Treaties, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 44 Copy of Telegram no.174, May 2, 1920, addressed to Constanța county prefect, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 45 Copy of Telegrams no. 167, 168, April 30, 1920 addressed to Brăila and Covurlui prefects, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 46 Later, in the context of discussions about the settlement of expenses for participation in the event, Commander Adam Jijie is mentioned as a participant on behalf of the Navy, the Romanian Ministry of War being indicated as responsible for covering the financial aspects. Ministry of Communication to MAS, no. 09197, November 1, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 47 Letter of the Comission for the application of treaties to MAS no. 264, June 11, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 48 MAS Telegram to Romanian Legation in Rome, June 11, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 49 Commander Jijie's telegram to MAS, June 14, 1920 and encrypted telegram no. 12911, June 14, 1920, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE. The final delegation was comprised of Ivan Semenescu, Captain in the Naval Reserve, commander in the Romanian Navigating Service, Emil Enescu, Commander in the Naval Reserve, Director of "Navigația Română" company Brăila, Adam Jijie, Commander in the Naval Reserve, Engineer, President of the General Union of Seamen of Romania, and Simeon Novac, Chief Engineer, Vice-President of the General Union of Seamen of Romania. League of Nations, *International Labour Conference, Second Session*, 15th June – 10th July, 1920, Genoa, Geneva, International Labour Office (1920): XXXIV.
- 50 Initially tasked with gathering all sailors formations in the country for them to appoint their delegate, Captain Constantin Tonegaru wrote to the Ministry: "I heard later that a commission left for Genoa, whose members did not have the express delegation of all Romanian sailors, but only of a small circle, which, as I read in the newspapers, displeased most Romanian sailors, who, as I heard, protested telegraphically at the Genoa Conference against these delegates". Address of Captain Constantin Tonegaru, lawyer of the Romanian

- Maritime Service to the General Directorate of Labour, September 6, 1920, f. 44, file 148, Ministry of Labour - Studies and international relations office fund, Romanian National Central Historical Archives (ANIC).
- 51 Letter of the Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 27770, March 2, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 52 The International Conference on Communications and Traffic, organised by the League of Nations between March 10 and April 20, 1921.
- 53 Letter by Ministry of Communication to MAS, no. 3941, March 3, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 54 It should be noted that during this period, the enactment of labour legislation sought to be approached either holistically, through a Labour Code, in the liberal vision, a project which failed in both 1923 and 1925, or in a phased, adaptive manner, in the national peasants' version.
- 55 Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 0265, April 6, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 56 According to art. 411 of the Treaty of Versailles, any of the member states was entitled to file a complaint with the International Labour Office if it was not satisfied by the way other members were securing the effective observance of any convention. As such, according to art. 412, each of the member states had to nominate three persons of industrial experience, of whom one had to be a representative of employers, one a representative of workers, and one a person of independent standing, to form together a panel from which the members of the Commission of Enquiry could be drawn.
- 57 Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 2251, July 20, 1920, file 14M2, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 58 Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească*, 26.
- 59 Dumitru Iancovici, specialist in law, author of the paper *Reforma agrară* (Brăila, 1888), 87, Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 121790, October 18, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 60 Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Legislația muncitorească*, 26-27.
- 61 Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen was a jurist with a doctorate in law, economics and finance from Paris, and had experience as a judge and lawyer. Although he officially entered the diplomatic service in 1923, he was entrusted with diplomatic missions as early as the fall of 1919, in Hungary. For a more comprehensive take on his diplomatic career see Adrian Vițalariu, *Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen: diplomat* (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2014).
- 62 Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 849, October 13 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 63 Letter of Ministry of Labour to MAS, no. 844, October 12, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 64 An exponent of the feminist movement in Romania, involved in the period in various League of Nations associations.

- 65 Telegram of the Romanian Legation in Paris, October 11, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 66 Note of the Romanian Legation in Vienna to MAS no. 3926, December 16, 1921, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 67 Report submitted at MAS with no. 57559, November 7, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 68 International Labour Office, *Records of proceedings of the International Labour Conference*, Fourth session, (Geneva, 1922), 98.
- 69 International Labour Office, *Records*, 137-139.
- 70 Telegram by the Romanian Legation in Geneva, no. 34, October, 22 1923, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 71 Director general at the Ministry of Labour, also a jurist by profession.
- 72 Telegram by the Romanian Legation in Geneva, no. 42, October, 29 1923, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 73 For a detailed account of Arnold Stocker's activity at the ILO please see my recent contribution: "A liaison for social reform in 1920s Romania: Arnold V. Stocker" in Stefano Gallo (ed.), *Networks of labour. International officers and formal networks in the history of the International Labour Organization*, (Palermo: Palermo University Press, 2024), 53-72.
- 74 Note by Romanian Legation at Bern to MAS, no. 1082 May 14, 1924, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- 75 The 1924 Romanian workers' delegation was led by Ion Flueraș, president of the Council of Romanian Workers' Unions, accompanied by technical advisors Romulus Dan and Ioan Mirescu.
- 76 See "Brief report by Mr. Arthur Fontaine, Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, on the credentials of the Delegates and Advisers nominated to take part", in *Records of proceedings of the International Labour Conference*, International Labour Office, Sixth session, (Geneva, 1924): 503-510.
- 77 International Labour Office, "Records of proceedings 1924", 253.
- 78 First Report of the Credentials committee, in International Labour Office, "Brief report", 510-512.
- 79 International Labour Office, "Brief report", 512-513.
- 80 C. R. Mircea, "Raportul inginerului C. R. Mircea, directorul general al U.G.I.R. asupra Lucrărilor Conferinței", in *Buletinul Uniunii Generale a Industriașilor din România*, year III, no. 9 (September 1924): 444-541.
- 81 UGIR's memo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania (I. Gh. Duca) November 14, 1924, Problema 240 – Congrese, Box 38, Congresul internațional pentru protecția legală a muncitorilor, Praga, 1924, AMAE.
- 82 Art. 397 of the Versailles Treaty also enabled the Departments responsible for studying and resolving labour issues to communicate directly with the ILO.

- ⁸³ Report from February 20, 1922, file 14M1, vol. 1, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- ⁸⁴ Geneva telegram no. 98, June 3, 1926, file 14M1, vol. 2, Convenții și acorduri Fund, AMAE.
- ⁸⁵ Member of the ephemeral Labour Party (1919).

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