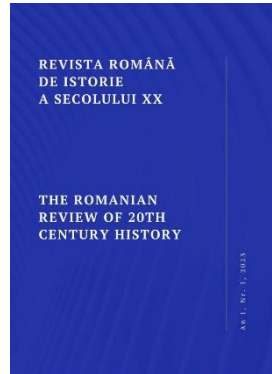


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Romania in Lucien Wolf's Diary of the Paris Peace Conference (1919)

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The aim of this article is to introduce into the scholarly circuit some new information, from lesser-known British sources, about the Jewish question in Romania and its discussion at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, as well as about the development of the system of protection of minorities “of race, language and religion”. First and foremost, there is the unpublished diary of Lucien Wolf, one of the leaders of the British Jewry, a text held in the Mocatta Library, part of the Special Collections at University College Library in London.

Lucien Wolf, the son of a Bohemian Jew and a Viennese Jewish mother who emigrated to England after the 1848 Revolution, lived from 1857 to 1930. He was one of the foremost British Jewish leaders, a member of the leadership of several Jewish organisations in the British Empire, the best known being the (Co)Joint Foreign Committee (JFC), of which he was secretary from 1917-1930. Wolf was also a journalist, historian, diplomat and advocate of rights for Jews and other ethnic and religious minorities. He was, however, an opponent of Jewish nationalism, in the form of Zionism, which he saw as a cause of anti-Semitism¹. He feared that Zionist ideology carried with it the danger of a dual nationality and creed, which implied the suspicion of divided loyalties, which could lead to the accusation of lack of patriotism and

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¹ Israel Zangwill, “Mr. Lucien Wolf on «The Zionist Peril»”, in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Apr., 1905), University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 397-425.

could be a partial or total excuse for antisemitism. Initially Wolf chose to be a kind of “territorialist”, i.e., a kind of Zionist but without Palestine (Eretz Israel)², but finally he confined himself to being an “assimilationist”, who considered Judaism/Jewishness to be a spiritual and religious identity, not a nation³.

My research on the Paris Peace Conference after the Great War, which lasted for almost three decades, also led me to Lucien Wolf’s work. I have come across his name in the international historiography dedicated to the Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920), but especially in the memoirs of participants in the Paris Peace Forum (for example, Harold Nicolson⁴ or James Headlam-Morley⁵). He seemed to be a secondary figure, i.e., he had no access to the world’s greatest leaders, Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau or David Lloyd George, but he always met the second echelons of the delegations of the Great Powers, being somewhat ubiquitous, meaning that he was always in the vicinity of where something important was happening in Paris. Later I was to learn that the period of the peace meeting was the high point of Lucien Wolf’s career, as he was instrumental in the design of the treaties for the protection of racial, linguistic and religious minorities, seeing them as an effective instrument for minority groups in Central and Eastern European states – especially the Jews – to live in harmony with the

² Chimen Abramsky, “Lucien Wolf’s Efforts for the Jewish Communities in Central and Eastern Europe”, in *Jewish Historical Studies*, Jewish Historical Society of England, Vol. 29, 1982-1986, p. 282-283.

³ Mark Levene, the British historian who has studied in detail the work of Lucien Wolf, has offered various nuances of this assertion, but its essence we do not think can be disputed. See, for example, Mark Levene, “Lucien Wolf: Crypto-Zionist, Anti-Zionist or Opportunist par-excellence?”, in *Studies in Zionism: Politics, Society, Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1991, p. 133-148; Idem, “Remembering Lucien Wolf: reconsidering his legacy”, in *Jewish Historical Studies*, Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England, 2018, Vol. 50 (1), No. 2, p. 8-13.

⁴ Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1965, p. 243.

⁵ Sir James Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference 1919*, ed. by Agnes Headlam-Morley, Russell Bryant, Anna Cienciala, London, Methuen, 1972, p. 111-112, 213.

majorities and authorities of the states that had emerged, reappeared on the map or considerably enlarged their territories, in the spirit of the democratic and liberal traditions of the European West.

Subsequently, my research in the League of Nations Archives in Geneva showed me that Wolf devoted the last decade of his life to the system of protection of minorities "of race, language and religion", being a kind of semi-official consultant/"supervisor", working side by side with members of the League of Nations' Minority Section (1920-1930).

Under these circumstances, it is somewhat surprising that Lucien Wolf's diary, dedicated to his work at the Paris Peace Forum, has not yet been published. It is, however, used by various authors, but somewhat tangentially, not as an essential source. Moreover, to our knowledge, it has not been read so far in terms of references to Romania, Romanian Jews or Wilhelm Filderman.

The authors I consulted who cited Lucien Wolf's diary, but in a somewhat peripheral way, were Sharman Kadish⁶, Mark Levene⁷ and Carole Fink⁸. None of the three authors attribute any significant importance to that source, the citations being somewhat in passing, alongside others. Wolf's diary is cited only as a minor addition to information from other sources. However, the location of the diary is indicated: Mocatta Library, Special Collection, University College Library, London. We found this approach surprising, especially as the diary is lively, alert and full of juicy information about what was happening at the Paris Peace Conference from the perspective of the interests of the various Jewish communities and the protection of minorities. Interestingly, access to Wolf's diary is not exactly easy either. It does not appear in the public catalogue of the special collections

⁶ Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish community, Britain, and the Russian Revolution*, London, Frank Cass, 1992, p. 250-251, 255, 259 and *passim*.

⁷ Mark Levene, *War, Jews, and the New Europe, The Diplomacy of Lucien Wolf, 1914-1919*, The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, London, Portland, 1992, p. 225, 277-8, 287.

⁸ Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others, The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 168, 195, 206, 224, 262.

section of the University College Library London; nor is it in a more extensive catalogue, intended for a more restricted circulation, which a kind UCL librarian offered it to me. It took a call from that custodian to one of the Jewish studies specialists at the British university to identify a typed copy of the diary.

I suppose the main reason why Lucien Wolf's diary was not published or even used consistently in historical research was that Wolf was an anti-Zionist and described in great detail and with great talent the major tensions at the Peace Conference between various small groups representing Jews from various Western European countries, Central and Eastern European states and the United States. Perhaps the family or whoever owns the rights to the text objected. The anti-Zionists (from the *Joint Foreign Committee* and the *Alliance Israélite universelle*) later lost the battle with Zionism, so it was probably thought best not to muddy the waters⁹.

The diary is 661 pages long and covers the period from January 14 to October 12, 1919, so it begins a few days before the opening of the peace meeting and then presents the most important stage of the Paris peace forum, the one attended by all the major leaders of the Great Powers, the one marked by the signing of the Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the adoption of the Pact of the League of Nations and the treaties for the protection of minorities "of race, language and religion". Subsequently, the Conference became diluted: the major leaders left, and the remaining decision-makers were of lower rank, as were the decisions they took, even though some of them were vital for Central and Eastern Europe.

Lucien Wolf's diary is a very dense text of political information, a detailed description of the backstage of the Paris Peace Conference, as well as a goldmine for those who want to get close to both the Parisian atmosphere of 1919 and the details of the action of the Jewish lobby at the peace forum. In addition, Romania is one of the diary's leading characters. The direct references to Romania and the past and present actions of its leaders, to Romanian Jews and their leaders, are spread

⁹ Catherine Nicault, "L'Alliance israélite universelle et le sionisme (1914-1919)", in *Tsafon*, vol. 74, 2017, p. 49-64.

over 209 of the text's 661 pages, almost a third of the total. If we add the contextual and generalizing references to Eastern Europe, we find more than 200 more pages. In other words, about two thirds of the diary refers, directly or indirectly, to Romania. Only Poland enjoys the same interest as Romania.

Among all these references to Romania and its inhabitants, I have chosen to present in this article especially those concerning the Jews in Romania, their representatives and, especially, Wilhelm Filderman, as well as some relevant aspects concerning the disagreements between the leading personalities of the various Jewish communities that were represented in Paris. Last but not least, my presentation also included various references to the Romanian state, its political leaders and their involvement in the fierce battles behind the scenes of the Paris peace meeting.

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On the very first day of his presence in Paris, January 14, 1919, Lucien Wolf, in a conversation with Jacques Bigart, secretary general of AIU, an old friend of his¹⁰, presented the purpose of his trip to the French capital: "to endeavour to lay the foundations of the organisation with which the French, British, American and Italian Delegations might work when they were assembled in Paris"¹¹. The idea was to form "the nucleus of a common secretariat" which would work at the AIU headquarters and determine which documents were to be sent to the Parisian peace guiding powers, texts which were to be translated into French, the language of international diplomacy at the time.

The next day, Wolf met with other prominent representatives of various Jewish communities, such as Sylvain Lévi, the well-known French orientalist, Émile Meyerson, a French philosopher born in the Polish territories, or Nahum Sokolow, an important leader of Polish Jews, but who had been living in London since the beginning of the 1914 war, working as one of the close collaborators of Chaim Weizmann, the

¹⁰ Eugene C. Black, "Squaring a Minorities Triangle: Lucien Wolf, Jewish Nationalists and Polish Nationalists", in Paul Latawski (ed.), *The Reconstruction of Poland, 1914-23*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1992, p. 15.

¹¹ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary*, Mocatta Library, Special Collection, University College Library, London, f. 2.

well-known Zionist leader. Wolf perceived Sokolow as being in a different ideological camp, but did not rule out collaboration with him. He is told that there is already a committee, headed by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, to facilitate talks with the peace meeting. Sokolow was already part of this structure, which Wolf saw as a positive thing as long as “in non-Zionist matters the Zionists are not acting independently, and hence it facilitated my negotiations with Sokolow”¹². On the same day, Lucien Wolf meets Sokolow again and discusses his idea of setting up a secretariat of Jewish organisations present in Paris; the Zionist leader agrees in principle, but stresses that it was of the utmost importance that this structure should include representatives of Jews from Poland, Romania and other Central and Eastern European countries. From the presentation of the discussion, it is clear that there is an outset of tension between the two: Wolf feels that the Westerners can represent the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe very well, while Sokolow insists on the right of the Eastern Jews to defend their own opinions¹³.

From his conversations with French Jews, Wolf learns that the political leaders of the Great Powers have ruled out the possibility of holding a Jewish congress in the French capital in parallel with the peace forum. But that did not prevent the Jewish representatives from meeting informally. Also, Wolf’s meetings with various leaders of the AIU (Jacques Bigart, Sylvain Lévi, Israel Lévi) illustrated the similarity of views on Zionism, which was considered to be harmful and which they were wary of, preferring Sokolow to Weizmann¹⁴. The American Jewish representatives were still expected in Paris.

On January 17, 1919, Lucien Wolf met, rather ceremonially, with the head of the AIU, Eugène Seé, who approved his plan, but the British man’s opinion was not exactly favourable: “like most other French Jews, he has a total misconception of the Jewish-Nationalist Movement in Poland, which he confounds with Zionism”¹⁵. Although both were anti-Zionist, Seé was firmer in his belief. Wolf was not on good terms

¹² *Ibidem*, f. 4.

¹³ *Ibidem*, f. 5-6.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 8-9.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 13.

with Baron Edmond de Rothschild and tried to find a way of communicating both through Seé and especially through Georges Wormser, a close friend of the Baron and a member of Georges Clemenceau's cabinet, which he was to head from November 1919.

“I saw Wormser this afternoon. His reception of me was extremely cordial. I first told him about my scheme for co-ordinating the work of the Delegations and said I hoped I should have the support of Baron Edmond. He showed much interest in the scheme, and said it was high time the work was organised. I found him very concerned about the situation in Eastern Europe. This surprised me a little as I was under the impression that he and the Baron were entirely absorbed by Palestine. I then went on to speak about my relations with the Baron, and reminded him of what had happened when I was last in Paris. I said I was most anxious to pay every respect to Baron Edmond, but that in view of the way in which he had swallowed Dr. Weizmann's calumnies and the letter he had written about me to Leopold de Rothschild, it was difficult for me to approach him. I asked him for his advice. Wormser said: «The result to-day is that Weizmann may not cross the threshold of this house». He then went on to tell me that the Baron had changed his opinion of Weizmann. He found him «un obstiné, un fanatique, même un homme dangereux». Relations with were entirely severed. The Baron had been especially upset by the way in which Weizmann concentrated himself on Palestine to the exclusion and even the prejudice of other and larger Jewish questions. He could not follow in this course. He found Sokolow much more reasonable, much more supple and much more sincere”¹⁶.

Also on January 17, 1919, Lucien Wolf had dinner with the brother of David Mitrany, a British scholar of Romanian origin, son of Sephardic Jews from Bucharest, settled in London since 1912 and known in London political and diplomatic circles¹⁷. David Mitrany's brother was considered by Wolf to be “a very charming young man” and worked at the Romanian mission in Paris, where he held a “high” position. He

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 13-14.

¹⁷ Mihai Alexandrescu, “David Mitrany during the First World War. Some Ambiguities in His Biography”, in *SUBB - Historia*, Volume 62, No. 2, December 2017, p. 48-59.

brought Wolf a message from Nicolae Mișu, Romania's minister in London and a member of the Romanian delegation to the Peace Conference, announcing that the text of the decree-law on the naturalisation of Romanian Jews had arrived in Paris and was being translated. The discussion between Wolf and Mitrany was about what Wolf called "the Romanian question", meaning in fact the question of the Jews in Romania. Mitrany was of the opinion that the new legislation was "quite satisfactory", but Wolf, without knowing its content, was adamant that "we could not afford to leave the question any longer in the hands of the Romanian Government, but must seek a decision from the Peace Conference which would be binding on Romania, independent of any Laws she might pass"¹⁸.

On January 18, 1919, the day the Paris Peace Conference began, Lucien Wolf left his visiting card to Ion I. C. Brătianu, Nicolae Mișu and Solomon Rosenthal¹⁹, asking for meetings. He then sees William Tyrell, a relatively important figure in the British delegation in Paris, in his capacity as head of the *Political Intelligence Department*, with whom he discusses the coordination of efforts for the Jewish cause, but also listens to his complaints about the conference leaders, who did not realise the magnitude and complexity of the problems they were facing.

Also on January 18, January Wolf reconnects with Baron Edmond de Rothschild and attends the meeting to set up the coordination structure of the Jewish delegations, where he gets on wonderfully with the French Jews, but again meets Chaim Sokolow, who was of the opinion that the views of the Eastern European Jews should be known before any concrete action. It was the same disagreement that had been

¹⁸ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 15.

¹⁹ Solomon Rosenthal was a Jewish lawyer whom Ionel Brătianu included in the extended Romanian delegation to the peace meeting (Wilhelm Filderman, *Memorii & Jurnal*, Volumul 1, 1900-1940, ed. by Jean Ancel, translation by Nicolae Drăgușin, Bucharest, Hasefer, 2016, p. 207; Hary Kuller, "Fifty years of the Romanian History of Judaism reflected in the Filderman Archive", Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, Centre for the Study of the History of Romanian Jews, in *Buletinul Centrului, Muzeului si arhivei istorice a evreilor Romania*, no. 8-9/2002, Bucharest, p. 130).

foreshadowed earlier: Wolf believed he could speak for the Eastern Europeans even if they were not present, and Sokolow disagreed.

On the next evening, Lucien Wolf met Nicolae Mișu, who told him that the translation of the decree-law was ready and that he would give it to him the next day, as well as the fact that Brătianu wanted it published immediately in the French press. The Romanian diplomat was of the opinion that the decree would be quite satisfactory for the Jews. Wolf was more reserved, but promised to speak his mind. Nicolae Mișu also told Lucien Wolf that Brătianu was to receive a delegation from the AIU. The conclusion of the meeting was: "He is embarrassingly friendly. I fancy the idea of the Roumanians is to persuade us not to go to the Conference, but to rest satisfied with the Decree Law. Of course, this is impossible"²⁰.

On January 20 Wolf meets again with Sokolow, who seems to value his position as mediator between the Zionists and the anti-Zionist leaders of the AIU, as well as his relationship with Baron Edmond de Rothschild and his close associate and Clemenceau's, Georges Wormser. Wolf is delighted with this influential position. On the same day, Wolf meets Allen Leeper and Harold Nicolson, members of the British delegation, who

"are in charge of Roumanian matters among other things. From what they told me I was confirmed in my impressions that the tactics of the Roumanians are directed towards preventing the Roumanian Jewish question being brought before the Peace Conference by us. Leeper seemed disappointed when I told him that we should not be satisfied with the new Decree Law whatever its terms might be, and that we should insist on a decision from the Conference. He reminded me that I had often argued myself that in the interests of the Roumanian Jews a spontaneous solution of the question by Roumania herself would be far better than a solution imposed upon Roumania by Foreign Powers. I said that was still my opinion, but unfortunately, we were not sure of a solution from Roumania herself. The Decree Law would have no value until it was sanctioned by a Constituent Assembly, and I felt certain that that sanction would not be obtained. At any rate I said we could not take the risk. He asked me in any representations we might make to the

²⁰ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 26.

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Conference to refer, at any rate, to the Decree Law as an earnest of the good intentions of Roumania. I said we should certainly do so, and in fact we were anxious to do anything that we make our proceedings agreeable to the dignity of Roumania. I gave him confidentially a copy of our Memorial, and I told him I would see him again on my return to Paris”²¹.

On the same evening of January 20, 1919, Lucien Wolf had a long conversation with Baron Edmond de Rothschild about the avatars of the organisation of Jewish groups at the peace forum and the question of Zionism. The Baron complained that no one was informing him about developments in the Jewish issue, and Wolf promised to remedy the situation, especially if the headquarters of the Jewish central structure at the conference would be the headquarters of the AIU. The baron told him about the break with Weizmann and the various disagreements with him. A key issue seemed to him to be control over education, which he vehemently opposed, as well as pre-emptive land rights, and emigration, which he wanted especially for conservative Jews to prevail in Palestine. He did not accept the idea of “secular nationality”: “What is the Jew to me without the faith? He is like an Arab, a Chinaman, but he is not a Jew; it is only the religion that makes the Jew”²². The baron then spoke out against the anti-Zionist attitude that organizations of British Jews had shown, saying that it was a mistake to oppose the establishment of a Jewish community in Palestine, but only to correct the errors that some Zionists were making. Wolf told him he preferred not to get involved, but the baron told him that would be a catastrophe. The discussion ended amicably, with Wolf promising to inform the JFC of its contents²³.

I have presented the contents of Lucien Wolf’s diary from the early days of the Paris Peace Conference in more detail to illustrate the richness of the text, which is relevant not only to the Parisian atmosphere

²¹ *Ibidem*, ff. 28-29; the same meeting of Lucien Wolf with British diplomats is also reported in British diplomatic documents, confirming, for example, that Allen Leeper, the *Foreign Office’s* expert on Romania, considered the Jewish question in Romania to be resolved once the Romanian government had passed the relevant legislation (TNA, FO 608/48/20, f. 180, 187).

²² Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 31.

²³ *Ibidem*, f. 29-33.

of mid-January 1919, but especially to the feverish activity behind the scenes of the peace meeting, to the avatars of consultation and collaboration between the various Jewish groups represented in the French capital. We will not be able to go on with so many details, but will limit ourselves to a few key moments from the perspective of the tribulations of intra-Jewish cooperation, but in particular to the aspects concerning Romanian Jews and Romania.

Between the various representatives of the Jews gathered in Paris there were not only ideological or visionary differences, not only sometimes contradictory opinions on the practical steps to be taken, but also personal pride and whims, clashes of personalities and various animosities, old and new. For example, Lucien Wolf could criticise some French Jews, but he got on best with them. But he was much more reserved towards American Jews, whose influence – due to their superior financial resources – irritated him, and towards Eastern European Jews he had a slightly paternalistic attitude, considering that he could support their cause even better than they did²⁴. The diary of the British Jewish leader is relevant from this perspective. For example, on 10 February, he was unwilling to wait for the views of Eastern European Jews gathered in Bern for a conference, believing that Parisian or London Jews could express such views at least as well²⁵. He had the same opinion about a meeting of Polish Jews in Warsaw²⁶. In mid-February disagreements with Sokolow on the same subject of Eastern European Jews broke out again²⁷.

On February 20, tensions between the Jews present in Paris reach a climax once a plan by Zionist organisations becomes known for representation in the eventual joint body to be as follows: two members each from the AIU and JFC, four from the Americans and 20 from Eastern European Jewish and Western Zionist organisations. Wolf and

²⁴ The same approach was taken by French Jews speaking on behalf of Romanians or other Eastern Europeans (see the opinion of Allen Leeper, TNA, FO 608/48/20, f. 208).

²⁵ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 36.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 43.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 59.

his AIU friends would have been put in an obvious minority: "This is an invitation to commit hari-Karri [sic! - Seppuku or Harakiri]. We are asked to give up our independence and to enter a hostile confederation bound hand and foot"²⁸. Obviously the British and French Jews reject the proposed scheme and organize to counter it.

On March 1, 1919, Lucien Wolf learns from his colleagues that the Zionist leaders had obtained a meeting with the members of the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference²⁹. In the absence of Georges Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, the meeting was chaired by the French Foreign Minister, Stephen Pichon, himself of Jewish origin, and the other heads of the Great Powers' diplomats were also present, Lord Balfour ("went to sleep as soon as he had settled in his chair"), Sydney Sonnino (the Italian Foreign Minister, the only one to show any interest) and Robert Lansing (the US Secretary of State, who "appeared to be perplexed and worried")³⁰. The leaders of the peace meeting listened to the speeches of the Zionist leaders (Weizmann, Sokolow, Menachem Ussishkin, André Spire), but the one who synthesized and somehow hijacked the strong Zionist message was Sylvain Lévi, who only supported the idea of a "national home", rejecting the other Zionist demands, which provoked, after the meeting, a contemptuous reaction from Weizmann, who told Lévi that he did not know him. Wolf noted that Sylvain Lévi's speech had been approved by the AIU leadership and included some Anglophobic overtones on the Palestine question from French political circles, overtones that Wolf proposed to keep in mind³¹.

On the evening of the same March 1, Lucien Wolf dines with James Headlam-Morley and David Prothero, leading members of the British delegation to the peace meeting, the former of whom is persistently and assertively anchored, making him an essential character in the story of the design of the 1919 Paris system of protection for national minorities. Headlam-Morley was Wolf's main lever of influence

²⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 73.

²⁹ André Chouraqui, *L'alliance israélite universelle et la renaissance juive contemporaine: (1860 - 1960)*, Paris, PUF, 1965, p. 472-481.

³⁰ *Lucien Wolf, Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 93.

³¹ *Ibidem*, f. 93-96.

in the larger entourage of the main protagonists, the British diplomat taking on the task of helping to make the protection of ethnic and denominational minorities resulting from the substantial change in Europe's borders as effective as possible. Through James Headlam-Morley, first and foremost, but also with the help of others, Lucien Wolf reached the pinnacle of his career at the Paris Peace Conference.

Paradoxically, however, this first meeting with Headlam-Morley did not go well for Wolf, as the British diplomat expressed scepticism about the chances of effective minority protection materialising under the aegis of the League of Nations, which was seen as an organisation of member states, a body that would regulate inter-state relations, and would inevitably be reluctant to engage between states and their citizens³². We know today that Headlam-Morley sensed well the constraints of the League, but these did not decisively prevent the Geneva-based structure from making salutary efforts to diminish, even if only partially and temporarily, the role of the minority issue as a factor in heightening international tensions.

In any case, Lucien Wolf's contact with the junior members of the British Empire's delegation to the Paris Peace Conference formed the basis of his action at the Parisian peace forum; from these members (James Headlam-Morley, David Prothero, William Tyrell, Edward Carr, Allen Leeper, Harold Nicolson and others) Wolf obtained valuable information, receiving, for example, the correspondence of the Supreme Council of the Conference with Romania on the question of the protection of minorities; with their help, Wolf was able to circulate various memoranda and papers supporting the cause of the Jewish communities in conference circles; through them he was able to exert extraordinary influence on the decisions of the peace meeting: the fact that the British were generally the architects of the compromise reached in Paris on most levels, often mediating between the Americans and the French, also proved true on the question of the establishment of the system of protection for racial, religious and linguistic minorities.

Lucien Wolf was deeply involved in the disagreements between the various representatives of the Jewish communities gathered in Paris.

³² *Ibidem*, f. 96-98.

He did not get along with the Zionists, as I have already mentioned, he did not like the Jewish envoys from Eastern Europe very much, but the ones he was extremely anxious about, because he knew that their money gave them major influence, were the American Jewish leaders. For example, towards the end of March 1919, when Judge Julian William Mack, president of the *Zionist American Jewish Congress*, arrived at the Paris meeting, Wolf insisted on meeting him immediately, but the first contact was unpleasant, because the American was very explicit in his Zionist views, which displeased Wolf, furthermore informing him that he had already joined the newly founded Zionist Bureau in Paris³³. Wolf's darkest forebodings were to be confirmed after the arrival in Paris of the other important American Jewish leaders, Louis Marshall³⁴ and Cyrus Adler. They carried out various reconciliation actions, but Wolf felt that these were only operations by which the JFC and AIU would be outnumbered and outvoted by the Zionist delegations³⁵.

On April 6, 1919, a large reconciliation meeting was held between Jewish delegates in Paris, but little was achieved³⁶. The meeting continued the next day, when a delegate from Romania, Schechter³⁷, accused the Western Jews of betraying the Romanian Jews in 1880, pursuing only their own interests and profit, and doing nothing ever since³⁸. Discussions continued on April 8, when a seven-person committee (Marshall, Adler, Sokolow, Thon, Ussishkin, Bigart and Wolf)³⁹ was formed, in which the Zionists were in the majority, and they tried to impose the term of nationality on the Jews. Bigart and Wolf were opposed, and the AIU representative even rejected the compromise

³³ *Ibidem*, f. 134-135.

³⁴ President of the *American Jewish Committee* and Vice President of the *American Jewish Congress*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 146-149; 154-157.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 164-168.

³⁷ Moșe (Moshe) Schaechter was a representative of Zionist Federation (Carol Iancu, *Emanciparea evreilor din România (1913-1919)*, București, Editura Hasefer, 1998, p. 267-268).

³⁸ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 169.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 172.

solution, which stated that "those Jews who desire to remain a religious minority shall be entitled to do so"⁴⁰.

Lucien Wolf's disagreements with American Jewish leaders would continue into late April and throughout May 1919, when the essential aspects of minority protection treaties were outlined. For example, on May 8, Wolf gloats that his formulas, not those of the Americans, have prevailed in the decisions of the Peace Conference⁴¹. He then blames the American Jewish delegates not only for failing to influence the conference's decisions, but also for obstructing him by undermining his efforts at the Paris peace forum; moreover, for Wolf, there was ample evidence that "the Americans and their Zionist allies sacrifice Jewish interests to their own amour propre"⁴². Moreover, on May 28, as what was to be the climax of the discussions on minority protection at the peace meeting approached, Wolf quarrels vehemently with Louis Marshall, and his conclusion about the Americans is bitter: "it is extraordinary how badly the Americans have served us on the whole. Owing to their difficulties with the Japanese, they had to withdraw the Civil and Religious Clause in the League of Nations Covenant. Then they opposed and defeated our Sunday Trading Clause in the Polish Treaty. Now they threaten to deprive the Polish and similar Treaties of all the guarantees which will make them of any practical use."⁴³.

On April 12, 1919, Lucien Wolf meets Wilhelm Filderman, a prominent leader of Romanian Jews, who had arrived in Paris to support the cause of his co-religionists. Wolf's description of him is eloquent:

"It appears, in spite of what Astruc told us, that the Roumanian Jews have been very deeply and widely infected by Nationalism. We were under the impression that the movement was confined to a few obscure Zionist Societies which had sent Schechter and Schin as Delegates to the Place Edouard VII⁴⁴, and that *Union des Israélites Indigènes* remained staunch for Equal Rights. This view has been disposed of by the arrival here of Mr. Filderman, the Vice-President of the Union, who tells us that

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 177.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, f. 236.

⁴² *Ibidem*, f. 238-240.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, f. 289-290.

⁴⁴ Address of AIU headquarters in Paris.

his Society, the largest and most representative of its kind in Roumania, has become Nationalist. Filderman called upon us to-day with Rabbi Nemirovo of Iassy⁴⁵. He is a young and very clever and voluble Roumanian barrister. He made his law studies in Paris, and speaks admirable French. He got himself naturalized in Roumania in the usual way – that is, by bribery. It cost him 13,000 francs, 5,000 of which were, he says, paid direct into the hands of the Roumanian Prime Minister. The bitterness with which he speaks of the Roumanians is indescribable. He says that owing to the persecutions the Jews suffered during the war and to the still worse outrages and humiliations practised upon them after the German withdrawal, there is not one of them who does not repudiate with indignation the idea of becoming a Roumanian. The Jewish National Movement in Poland, the Ukraine, and Czecho-Slovakia, has offered them an alternative, and they are all now for Nationalism, for a separate National curia and other separatist institutions. In this direction they are being helped by the Jewish National Councils established in Transylvania and the Bukovina. The Jews there, deprived of their Magyar and Austrian nationality by the prospect of annexation to Roumania, are equally averse from becoming Roumanians, and hence are claiming a separate Jewish Nationality for themselves. As they number some 800,000 souls their claim is likely to be embarrassing for the new Roumania. Mr. Filderman thinks, however, that the Roumanian Government may not be unwilling to recognise the Jewish Nationality. He argues that if Nationality minority rights are granted by the Peace Conference to the Magyars in Transylvania and the Germans in Bukovina, it will be to the interest of the Roumanian Government to detach the local Jews from them, and this they can only do by recognising them as a Jewish nationality. Filderman is, of course, discontented with our Formulae, but his criticisms of them are not very convincing. They are pedantic and pettifogging. The truth is that, like all the other Nationalists, he objects to any scheme which puts Equal Rights and political assimilation in the foreground”⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Iacob Isaac Niemirower (Yaakov Itzhak Niemirower) – 1872-1939, born in Lemberg, he was rabbi in Iași from 1896, and then served as chief rabbi of Jewish communities in the Old Kingdom and then throughout Romania (1921-1939).

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 183-185.

Romania in Lucien Wolf's Diary of the Paris Peace Conference (1919)

On April 13, 1919, the situation suddenly became more complicated when details of the proposal that the *Commission for the Study of Territorial Questions concerning Romania* had made to the Supreme Council concerning the treaty that the Romanian state was to accept for the protection of its minorities became known. Lucien Wolf immediately met with Louis Marshall, and then with Filderman and Astruc⁴⁷, all agreeing that immediate action was needed⁴⁸. Wolf requested hearings and met with Headlam-Morley and Allen Leeper⁴⁹, and then formally protested to the Peace Conference Secretariat⁵⁰. On April 23, Wolf met again with Filderman, discussed the British protest and reached a common point of view⁵¹, then on April 24, Wolf attended a large luncheon hosted by Aristide Blank at the Hotel Meurice, along with Octavian Goga, Nicolae Mișu, Solomon Rosenthal and others⁵², and on April 26, Wolf submitted the agreed formula with Filderman to the General Secretariat⁵³.

In early May 1919, the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference decided to set up a body to deal with minority issues and the "Jewish question". This is what was to be called the "New States and Minorities Committee". The composition of this body gave Lucien Wolf real satisfaction, because he felt that his influence on the issue would increase considerably. The members were the British James Headlam-Morley, the American David Hunter Miller and the Frenchman Philippe Berthelot, with another Briton, Edward Carr, as secretary⁵⁴. Wolf was on excellent

⁴⁷ Isaac Astruc was for more than 20 years the representative of AIU in Romania (Carol Iancu, *op. cit.*, p. 221).

⁴⁸ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 186-187.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 188-90; the British archives contain an account of these meetings from the perspective of the *Foreign Office*, Allen Leeper being irritated that confidential information was leaked to the Jewish delegations, and even making an official complaint about it (TNA, FO 608/48/20, f. 219-227).

⁵⁰ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 195-196.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, f. 211-212.

⁵² *Allen Leeper Diary*, The Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge University.

⁵³ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary*, f. 218; TNA, FO 608/48/20, f. 228-233.

⁵⁴ These were the prominent members of the Committee, but eventually the body included two Frenchmen, two Americans, two Britons, two Italians and a Japanese.

terms with Headlam-Morley and Carr, and Berthelot was close to the AIU, which made the American delegate a minority. Wolf exulted: "The appointment of this Committee is a great coup for us. [...] Instead of more or less banal Clauses in the Peace Treaty, we shall now have a detailed Statute of Minorities which will probably be the subject of special Treaties with States concerned"⁵⁵. His intuition was to prove true: there were special treaties, and the vision promoted by the JFC and the AIU was to prevail, at the expense of the one advocated by American Jewish representatives, closer to Zionism/Jewish nationalism.

On May 16, 1919, Lucien Wolf met again with Wilhelm Filderman, who told him that he had studied in detail, together with Louis Marshall, a copy of the draft "Polish" treaty on minorities, a version provided by David Miller, the US representative on the "Minorities Committee". As he had also learned about it that same evening, Headlam-Morley expressed his displeasure with Miller's attitude, his annoyance being even greater when he learned that Filderman had also received the information through the American channel: "he was still more excited when I told him that Filderman had seen it. He has apparently some reason for not trusting Filderman, whom he said he refused to see. He said that if the fact got out, the whole success of the negotiations would be jeopardised. The Council of Four and the Polish and Roumanian Governments would all be very angry, as they themselves had not seen the Treaty. He told me that he had brought the matter before the Commission that afternoon and he was sorry that Miller was not present to hear how strongly and unanimously his action was deprecated. [...] I agreed to see Marshall at once and impress upon him the vital necessity of keeping the whole thing a dead secret, and, above all, of muzzling Filderman"⁵⁶.

The next interaction between Wolf and Filderman took place in the context of late May and early June 1919, when it took place the offensive of the small states, led by Ion I. C. Brătianu, against the

⁵⁵ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 228-229.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 256-257.

projected minority protection system⁵⁷, and the Romanian government was still trying to offer legislative arguments to make the regulation of protection unnecessary at the Peace Conference, and, in addition, was conducting a campaign in the Parisian press presenting its good intentions. Wolf deplored the fact that some of the Romanian Jews "betrayed their cause"⁵⁸ and allied themselves with Brătianu⁵⁹; he discussed with Filderman the unsatisfactory nature of the legislation promoted by the government in Bucharest⁶⁰ and supported the approach of countering the press campaign with letters of protest⁶¹.

In any case, the confrontation at the plenary session of the Peace Conference on May 31, 1919 between the leaders of the so-called minority states and the world's major powers highlighted certain issues: the small states refused to submit without a fight; the Supreme Council had to reply in writing to the delegations from Romania and "Yugoslavia" and reject the proposals for negotiations by the Greeks and Czechoslovaks; the representatives of the Jews were not accepted at the talks and understood that nothing had been concluded and that their efforts had to be stepped up, especially in the direction of influencing the Western statesmen; all the participating actors understood that concessions had to be made, as there were no easy solutions. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the rebellion led by Brătianu came just two days after the German delegation's worrying reply to the draft treaty. The German reply contained specific references to the Germans' right to self-determination⁶².

⁵⁷ Lucian Leuştean, "Romania, the Paris Peace Conference and the Protection System of 'Race, Language and Religion' Minorities - A Reassessment", in *Journal of Romanian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2019), Stuttgart: *Ibidem-Verlag / Ibidem Press*, Special issue *Romania and the Paris Peace Conference (1919). Actors, Scenarios, Circulation of Knowledge*, ed. by Svetlana Suveică, p. 38-40.

⁵⁸ He probably referred to Solomon Rosenthal and Ezra Bercovici, both members of National Liberal Party who accompanied their leader at the Paris Peace Conference.

⁵⁹ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 306.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 327-328.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, f. 330-333.

⁶² LNA, 1/S336.

One of the consequences of the combined action of the so-called minority states was Georges Clemenceau's letter to Paderewski of June 24, 1919⁶³. The President of the Peace Conference amply justified the aims of the treaties concerning minorities. The mere existence of protective principles would, according to Clemenceau, make it easier for minorities to accept the new situation⁶⁴. The fact that the League of Nations was to supervise the guarantee of protection for minorities was to exclude potential interference in the internal affairs of the states concerned. The provisions on safeguards were therefore formulated with "the utmost scrupulousness" so as to eliminate any political character from any dispute that might arise as a result of the application of these provisions⁶⁵.

However, between May 31 and June 24, concessions had already been made on the treaty to be signed with Poland. For example, the supreme arbiter of disputes on minority issues became the Council of the League of Nations, where decisions were taken unanimously, so any member had the right of veto, which made it relatively easy to block any severe condemnations of breaches of the treaty. In the autumn, when the Eastern European rebels, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, had to be brought to order and made to sign the Treaty with Austria and the minority treaties, which they had refused to accept in September 1919, new concessions were made, in the Romanian case the so-called "Jewish clauses" (Articles 10-11 of the "Polish Treaty", i.e. those concerning Jewish committees and the Shabbat/Sabbath respectively)⁶⁶ disappeared, as did any reference to the Berlin Treaty. The quasi-official

⁶³ Pablo de Azcarate, *League of Nations and National Minorities, An Experiment*, New York, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945, p. 166-167.

⁶⁴ C. A. Macartney, *National States and National Minorities*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1934, p. 238-239.

⁶⁵ George Sofronie, *Principiul naționalităților în tratatele de pace din 1919-1920*, introductory study, editing and notes by Constantin Schifirneț, Bucharest, Albatros, 1999, p. 168-169.

⁶⁶ V. V. Tilea, *Acțiunea diplomatică a României, nov. 1919 – mart. 1920*, Sibiu, Tipografia Poporului, 1925, p. 31-32; Carol Iancu, *Lupta internațională pentru emanciparea evreilor din România, Documente și mărturii*, vol. I, (1913-1919), translated by Țicu Goldstein, Bucharest, Ed. Hasefer, 2004, p. 285-291.

history of the Peace Conference records states the following: "The attitude of the Romanians in this respect is not easy to understand. They seem to have regarded the whole system with such displeasure that they rejected any reference to it and carried this attitude to the point where they would not accept even a formal removal of their obligations; they preferred to act as if these obligations did not exist"⁶⁷. However, a vaguely conceived local autonomy for Germans and Hungarians in school and religious matters emerged⁶⁸.

Returning to Lucien Wolf's diary, on June 10, 1919, he received a visit from Wilhelm Filderman, who had just met Louis Dreyfus, in whose house Ionel Brătianu was living in Paris:

"...he has received an intimation from him that he (Filderman) might do well to see Bratiano and discuss the Jewish question in an amicable way. He was disposed to think that such a discussion might be useful, and he asked me what I thought. I said he was the best judge of Roumanian Jewish interests, and that I should be the last to stand in the way of a friendly understanding between Jews and non-Jews in Roumania. Such an understanding, however, must not interfere with the Minorities Treaties. With the best will in the world Roumanian statesmen cannot guarantee the permanence of any liberal solution of the Jewish question. Such guarantee can only come from the Treaties, and we must consequently adhere to them. Still it was quite possible that even the smooth acceptance of the Minority Treaty might be facilitated by a more friendly atmosphere as between Jews and non-Jews in Roumania"⁶⁹.

They then discussed the disagreements among the Eastern European Jewish delegations, stemming from the fact that some Jewish representatives, including Filderman, objected to a call to the Peace Conference that could be interpreted as hostile to their states. Those who held such reservations were considered "cowards and traitors" and the

⁶⁷ H. W. V. Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, London, Henry Frowde and Hodder & Stoughton, 1921, vol. V, p. 149.

⁶⁸ David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris with documents*, vol. XIII, *New States (Minorities)*, New York, Appeal Printing Company, 1924, p. 267-288, 296-297, 551-562.

⁶⁹ Lucien Wolf, *Peace Conference Diary...*, f. 353-354.

Americans were no longer able to maintain the unity of the Jewish nationalist camp⁷⁰.

The collaboration between Wolf and Filderman continued on July 13, 1919, when Headlam-Morley offered him a working version of the “Romanian treaty” for the protection of minorities:

“It has not yet been presented to the Roumanians, nor has it been settled by the lawyers. H-M. asked me for my views on it. Just as I was settling down to study it this morning, Filderman, by good luck, called on me, and we went through it together. A good many of our suggestions have been adopted and the Treaty as it stands is satisfactory. A few amendments, however, are needed, and Filderman will draw them up for me to-day”⁷¹.

On July 15, Filderman’s suggestions were received by Wolf, who forwarded them to Headlam-Morley. When he saw the British diplomat on 16 July, Wolf learned that the proposals had been accepted, with Filderman’s revisions being endorsed by the New States’ Committee. In particular, the third article was reworded to make it clear that it referred to the whole of the Romanian territory, not just the regions that had united with Romania. In Headlam-Morley’s view (as in Wolf’s), in that revised form “the treaty will be quite satisfactory to us”⁷².

By mid-July 1919, after the essential part of the peace meeting had ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Lucien Wolf felt victorious in his fierce struggle for influence over the decisions of the Peace Conference:

“The Americans have gone and will not come back; the Alliance [AIU] will not take the initiative; the Eastern Delegations are, as they have always been, a sham – they have no influence with the Peace Conference, and moreover they are themselves dwindling away. Just as all the work was on our shoulders at the beginning of the year, so it is again now. The members of the Eastern Delegations, who are still here, are very much disturbed by this situation, and Filderman told me

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 354.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, f. 457.

⁷² *Ibidem*, f. 460.

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yesterday that if I attempted to leave Paris before the Roumanian Treaty was signed he would telegraph a strong protest to London"⁷³.

On July 21, 1919, Lucien Wolf noted in his diary:

"Filderman came to see me yesterday and told me he had bad news from Roumania. Filderman has a tragical way of making announcements of this kind which seems to indicate in dumb show that the world is coming to an end and that he disclaims all responsibility for the catastrophe. I am used to these demonstrations. I asked him what had happened. He said that Roumania refuses to sign the Treaty. I said that that was not new, and if that was all he had to tell me I was afraid I could not be very much impressed by it. He then said that a Crown Council attended by all the Party Leaders except Take Ionescu, and presided over by the King, had been held at Bucharest, at which a formal decision to eject the Treaty had been unanimously adopted. I said that such a decision seemed to me a little premature, as the Roumanians had not yet received the Treaty..."⁷⁴.

In July-October 1919, after the conference had been "diluted" by the departure of many leaders, especially the Americans, but also others such as Ion I. C. Brătianu, and the events in Central Europe took a spectacular turn, with the occupation of Budapest and a good part of Hungary by Romanian troops, the issue of the "minority treaties" remained in the foreground, as did the collaboration between Wolf and Filderman, aimed, on the one hand, at securing an advantageous form of the draft "Romanian treaty" for the Jewish communities, and, on the other, at obtaining the acceptance of the treaty by the authorities in Bucharest. The two Jewish leaders met on July 24, with Filderman wondering whether something should be done to emphasise that the treaty did not diminish Romanian sovereignty⁷⁵. On July 28, the two met again, along with other Jewish delegates, to discuss the desirability of including Shabbat/Sabbath-related provisions, as well as the co-opting of eminent jurists specialising in international law⁷⁶ into the debate at the

⁷³ *Ibidem*, f. 462.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 472.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 481.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 493-495.

Paris peace forum. In early August, Wolf sensed the danger to the Jewish cause arising from the occupation of Budapest by the Romanians, meaning their increased firmness in dealing with the Paris leaders, including on the minority issue⁷⁷. On August 6, Wolf records that he was angry with Filderman, who had passed on to American Jews information he had obtained in confidence from Wolf⁷⁸.

Romanian opposition to the minority treaty has brought Wolf to exasperation: "one is never completely safe in face of Roumanian chutspa and chicanery"⁷⁹. On August 23, 1919, Lucien Wolf had a long discussion with the Greek leader Eleftherios Venizelos, who was also dissatisfied with the "Greek treaty", but at the same time surrendered, so to speak "We are weak, the Powers are strong, so whether we like it or not we must bow"⁸⁰, but he warned that Romania would not sign the treaty, or at least Brătianu would not: "It is not only a question of the actual provisions of the Treaty and of her [Romania's] sovereign rights, but she feels herself wounded by her general treatment at the hands of the Conference"⁸¹.

In mid-September 1919, after Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had refused to sign both the Treaty with Austria and the Minorities' Treaties, when Wolf was preparing to leave Paris, Wilhelm Filderman asked him to leave him in contact with members of the British delegation to the Peace Conference. Wolf refused: "I do not think there is much for them to do and they will only bore Carr. Besides, our Delegation does not like to see the members of foreign Jewish Missions. I advised F. and L. to place themselves in the hands of the Alliance [AIU] as being the most regular course, and I said I would speak to Bigart on the subject"⁸². Lucien Wolf's attitude indicates that he could collaborate with Filderman in the common interest, using the Bucharest

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 507-508.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 515.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 544.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 553.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, f. 556-557.

⁸² *Ibidem*, f. 618.

Jewish leader's knowledge of Romanian realities, but was not willing to give him real leverage and influence.

On September 16, 1919, Lucien Wolf left Paris and felt satisfied with his work:

"I left for London this morning [...] The continued recalcitrancy of Roumania is, of course, disappointing, but on the whole I do not think I ought to be very dissatisfied. Roumania was always a hard nut to crack, and it was to be expected that she would stand out to the last. She is, however, the only nut we have left uncracked. [...] I do not doubt that sooner or later Roumania will come into line with the others. We cannot pretend to have solved the Jewish Question in Eastern Europe, but at any rate we have got on paper the best solution that has ever dreamt of. We have still before us the task of working out this solution in practice. It will be difficult and delicate because we shall be confronted by two kinds of dangerous mischief-makers – on the one hand the violent anti-Semites, and on the other the extreme Jewish Nationalists. We have, however, in the Minority Treaties so solid a basis to work upon that I think we can look forward to the future with a great deal of confidence"⁸³.

Wolf returned to Paris on September 27, and the next day met Filderman, who was very concerned about the situation resulting from the Romanian state's refusal to sign the protective treaty for minorities⁸⁴. On October 7, Wolf saw Filderman for the penultimate time in Paris:

"Filderman was unusually interesting. He gave me an account of the political situation in Roumania showing that the new Cabinet of Generals is virtually a military dictatorship. It is a combination of Militarism and Reaction in their worst forms. All the political parties, with the exception of Bratiano's supporters and the pro-Germans under Mr. Marghiloman, refuse to do anything to do with it, and will not even take part in the elections. The elections will be a fraud only intended to hustle and intimidate the Peace Conference. Filderman says that in the interests of constitutional liberty in Roumania and in order to support Take Ionescu and the other tried friends of the Entente, the Peace Conference should not only stand by its demands but should destroy

⁸³ *Ibidem*, f. 622-623.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 625.

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the new Cabinet. I asked him to give me a Memorandum of what he had told me in time for tomorrow's meeting of the Supreme Council, and said I would get it into the hands of Polk and Leeper. He send me a very good Memorandum this afternoon, and I took it down to the Astoria and gave it to Leeper. I shall see Polk tomorrow"⁸⁵.

On October 11, Wolf met Filderman for the last time at the Paris peace meeting, and both were delighted with the vehemence with which the head of the American delegation, Frank Polk, treated Romania's attitude to the peace forum, to the amazement of the French delegate Philippe Bethelot. Polk mocked "the little bullet-headed Colonel", i.e., Ion Antonescu⁸⁶. The next day, Lucien Wolf was to leave Paris, this time for good. He felt that he had done a remarkable job, and it was mainly the British diplomats who had facilitated it: "Throughout the Conference my relations with everybody in the British Delegation have been excellent. Old acquaintances in the Foreign Office have ripened into real and enduring friendship, and these will be very useful in the coming times"⁸⁷.

In the autumn of 1919, before Romania signed the Minorities' Treaty on December 10, there was unprecedented pressure on the Romanian state. For example, the ultimatum of the peace conference to Romania on November 15 was the first really clear-cut text sent to the Romanians: it commented on the policy of procrastination practised by the governments in Bucharest, and it criticised the Romanian attitude of trying to treat relations with the Parisian forum on an equal footing: "the Romanian government has continued for three and a half months to negotiate with the Conference as if from power to power, disregarding rights and interests other than its own and refusing to accept the burdens of solidarity, yet wishing to benefit from advantages", the Romanians were asked to comply immediately with the decisions adopted by the Peace Conference regarding withdrawal from Hungary, the cessation of requisitions and the signing of the treaty with Austria and that on the protection of minorities. Romania had eight days to comply with the

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 648-649.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 658-659.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 659-661.

orders from Paris, an upon failing to do so it was to be removed from the ranks of the Allies, excluded from the Peace Conference, and the diplomatic missions of the great powers would be withdrawn from Bucharest: "The Supreme Council will be compelled, with the deepest regret, to break off relations with Romania, but at least it is aware that it has pushed patience to its last limits"⁸⁸.

The first reaction of the Văitoianu government to the threats included in the Allied ultimatum was to reject the conditions imposed by those in Paris. A firm reply⁸⁹ was drafted and even submitted to the Allied ministers in Bucharest on November 29, 1919, but at their insistence it was finally abandoned, leaving the task of replying to the cabinet to be formed in the following days⁹⁰. Also in the second half of November, King Ferdinand sent a letter to the President of France, the King of Great Britain and the King of Italy, protesting against the treatment to which the Romanian state was subjected at the Peace Conference and requesting the intervention of these heads of state with the governments of their countries. This message from the Romanian sovereign aroused the anger of those on the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference, who were annoyed by Ferdinand's less than constitutional approach⁹¹. On the other hand, it is worth noting that the Romanian sovereign's letter was not sent to the American President Woodrow Wilson, which was both impolite and an indication that the Romanians did not think they could get anything more from the United States, given the animosity of the American delegates towards Romania and the non-ratification by Congress of the acts signed at the Paris peace meeting. In any case, Ferdinand's attempt proved fruitless.

⁸⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference 1919*, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1946 (henceforth *FRUS, PPC, 1919*), vol. IX, p. 176-179, 182-184; E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds.), *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (henceforth *DBFP*), First Series, London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1956, vol. II, p. 311-312.

⁸⁹ *DBFP*, vol. VI, p. 445-450.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 443-445.

⁹¹ *FRUS, PPC, 1919*, vol. IX, p. 369-370.

The deadline set in the ultimatum of November 15 was subsequently extended several times⁹², due to the government crisis in Bucharest, as well as the Bolshevik offensive in Ukraine that was reactivating the communist threat against Romania. When it became clear that Ionel Brătianu would no longer hold any official position in the new cabinet resulting from the elections in Romania, Georges Clemenceau dropped his vehemence against Bucharest. And thanks to his insistence, supported by the Italian representative in the Supreme Council, the deadline for the Romanian state to comply with the ultimatum was extended⁹³. In addition, the French Prime Minister had a meeting on 4 December with Victor Antonescu, Romania's plenipotentiary minister in Paris, during which Clemenceau declared himself "a great friend of the Romanians" and said he would support the Romanian demands regarding amendments to the minority treaty⁹⁴.

On December 6, 1919, the Supreme Council was informed in plenary that Alexandru Vaida-Voevod from Transylvania was to form the government and accept the conditions decided in Paris⁹⁵. In reality, the cabinet led by Vaida had already been formed on December 5. The new Prime Minister immediately sent a letter to the President of the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference, Georges Clemenceau, stating his position: he was in agreement with the signing of the Minorities' Treaty, but, he wrote, "we cannot suppress the hope that the wisdom of the Supreme Council will be able to find suitable ways of admitting certain modifications which are not essential from a principled point of view, which affect neither the spirit of the treaty nor the rights of the minorities, but which, from the point of view of the future security of the country and its international relations, are of decisive importance for Romania"⁹⁶.

Following the reply from the new cabinet in Bucharest, on December 9 the Conference leaders held the final discussion on the

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 354, 462.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 459-462.

⁹⁴ AMAE, fund 71/1914, E2, Part II, Paris, 1914-1924, vol. 3, f. 519.

⁹⁵ *FRUS, PPC, 1919*, vol. IX, p. 508.

⁹⁶ AMAE, fund 71/1914, E2, Part I, vol. 153, f. 122.

amendments⁹⁷ to the so-called Minorities Treaty, concluding that those references to Romania's independence and to the 1878 Berlin Treaty should be omitted from the preamble, a sentence should be added stating that the treaty had been prepared in agreement with Romania, and, finally, Articles 10-11, which made special references to Romanian Jews, should be removed⁹⁸. Consequently, on December 10, 1919, General Constantin Coandă, Romania's delegate to the Peace Conference, signed the treaties with Austria, Bulgaria and the one on the protection of minorities. The American Frank Polk gave one last proof of inelegance towards the Romanians by signing the minorities treaty on 9 December, one day earlier, thus refusing to sit at the same table as the Romanian delegation.

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In the Romanian historiography, but not limited to it, the activities of the various Jewish groups at the Paris Peace Forum seem to be summed up in a single international Jewish body, compact and united, which was a factor of international pressure in favour of Jewish rights. We know today that this did not exist, but was merely an illusion caused, on the one hand, by the presence of representatives of Jewish background in the delegations of the Great Powers (the Italian Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino, the French Louis Klotz – Minister of Finance – and Paul Mantoux, Clemenceau's interpreter, the British Edwin Montagu (Secretary of State for India) and Lewis Namier, Americans Louis Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, Louis Epstein, Henry Morgenthau and Oscar Straus, to name but a few)⁹⁹, and, on the other hand, by the many Jewish representatives from various Western, Central and Eastern European organisations who were hanging around the official delegations. They all seemed to be part of a monolith, but the reality was that there was an

⁹⁷ These changes had been agreed earlier in a discussion between Philippe Berthelot and Victor Antonescu (*DBFP*, vol. II, p. 412-413), and the Conference experts, except for the Americans, accepted the changes (*Ibidem*, p. 422-424, 517-518). Iuliu Maniu had also promised the British diplomats that Romania would sign the "minority treaty" (LNA, 1/S336).

⁹⁸ TNA, FO 608/54/5, ff. 314-326; *FRUS, PPC, 1919*, vol. IX, p. 538-540.

⁹⁹ M. Levene, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

enormous diversity of Jewish positions on Jews, and some views were not only different but contradictory: some were Zionists and others assimilationists; some were moderates and others radicals; some were citizens of the Great Powers and others came from the eastern half of Europe. In addition to their diverse views, there were conflicting egos, as well as competing temperaments.

Most delegates from Eastern Europe supported the goals of a Jewish nationalism and wanted to achieve national minority status for Jews. Most of the American delegates were Zionists. In any case, Lucien Wolf, like most of the Western European delegates, opposed both Jewish nationalism and Zionism. When a majority of the Jewish delegations united to form the *Comité des délégations juives*, the British and French Jewish representatives, with Wolf as their leader, refused to join that body. But regardless of differences with other delegates, Lucien Wolf worked with members of the *Comité des délégations juives* to secure rights for Jews through minority treaties. He used his diplomatic skills and personal contacts to facilitate negotiations, distributed documents supporting the Jewish cause, and was an extremely successful lobbyist. Lucien Wolf, in his diplomatic work, was always cautious. He preferred to work behind closed doors with people with whom he felt close and with whom he shared views, often avoiding direct pressure on the Foreign Office or foreign governments. As a loyal British citizen, he feared that any over-aggressive action on behalf of his co-religionists abroad would call into question his and other Jews' loyalty to their countries. He was also afraid that such a trenchant approach might fuel anti-Semitism. Moreover, like any liberal Westerner, he hoped that the regimes in Eastern Europe would reform and eventually become enlightened governments in which Jews would enjoy equal rights on all levels, as they had in France and Britain.

From this perspective should also be viewed his allegations concerning Wilhelm Filderman. He appreciated the Romanian Jewish leader, worked effectively with him for the common cause¹⁰⁰, but regarded him with suspicion at times, not fully trusting him. They were not compatible temperamentally and ideologically. Filderman seemed to

¹⁰⁰ W. Filderman, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

Romania in Lucien Wolf's Diary of the Paris Peace Conference (1919)

Wolf prone to exaggeration, too restless and too unwilling to compromise pragmatically with the Romanian state. He suspected him of nationalism and Zionism, which he considered the causes of anti-Semitism. Wolf was also disturbed by Filderman's closeness to American Jews, a fact recorded in the memoirs of the Jewish leader in Bucharest¹⁰¹, and he sometimes suspected that his collaboration with the AIU may also have had an anti-British touch. Nevertheless, he valued Filderman's expertise in Romanian matters and used it to achieve common goals.

And, finally, paraphrasing the words of Lucien Wolf, we may say that Romania was indeed "a hard nut to crack", "the only nut ... let uncracked", but, at the end of the day, she has come into line with the others. We may add just a possible topic to meditate upon: despite the fierce opposition of Romania towards the "minority treaty", the Romanian state was during the inter-war years one of the most accommodating members of the system of minority protection under the aegis of the League of Nations.

Romania in Lucien Wolf's Diary of the Paris Peace Conference (1919)

(Abstract)

The present article aims at introducing into the scholarly circuit new pieces of information, from lesser-known British sources, about the Jewish question in Romania and its discussion at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, but also on the development of the system of protection of minorities "of race, language and religion". It does so by focusing on a text held in the Mocatta Library, Special Collections at University College Library in London, namely the 661-page unpublished diary of Lucien Wolf, who, albeit its secondary status at the Conference, was one of the leaders of the British Jewry. The text shows that, although an anti-Zionist, Lucein Wolf was instrumental in the design of the treaties for the protection of racial, linguistic and religious minorities in Central and Eastern European states, but also a figure which devoted around a decade to consolidating the works of the League of Nations' Minority Section (1920-1930).

Keywords: Lucien Wolf, The Paris Peace Conference, (Co)Joint Foreign Committee (JFC), Minority treaties, Zionism

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 209-214.