

**TRADE AGREEMENTS AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN
IRELAND AND ROMANIA
IN DOCUMENTS FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND
(1930s-1980s)**

Nicoleta STANCA¹

Abstract

The documents that I have included in this article dedicated to the trade agreements and commercial relations between Ireland and Romania in the decades of the 20th century were traced in the National Archives of Ireland in June 2022, when I had the opportunity to collaborate with the team of the Embassy of Romania in Ireland and do research on the bilateral relations between the two countries. One of the earliest trade exchanges (1931) however was found in the library of University College Dublin and I have also made use of other Romanian sources to offer a more comprehensive picture of the difficulties often preventing the two countries from developing more substantial commercial and diplomatic links in the respective period.

Keywords: Ireland; Romania; National Archives of Ireland; trade; diplomacy.

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1. Irish-Romanian Trade 1930-1939

The first document on trade agreements and commercial relations between Ireland and Romania in the decades of the 20th is the *Treaty Series* No. 41 (1931) of the “Irish Free State Treaty Series”: Exchange of Notes Between His Majesty’s Government in the Irish Free State and the Romanian Government in Regard to Commercial Relations, Bucharest, Oct., 1/ 27, 1930. There are two official letters that make up this document. The first one was sent by Mr. Michael Palairt to the Romanian Minister G. G. Mironescu and it stated two main aspects regarding the commercial relations between the Irish Free State (the name of the Republic of Ireland in the period 1922-1937, Connolly 280) and Romania, namely: 1) that his Majesty’s Government in the Free State do not wish to take advantage of the accession clause of the Anglo-Romanian Commercial Treaty, and 2) that according to article 36 of the Anglo-Romanian Commercial Treaty, the goods produced in Romania are accorded when imported in the Irish Free State the favourable treatment given to those from any other most-favoured nation. Thus, the expectation was that the goods manufactured or produced in the Irish Free State be accorded complete and unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment. However, this should not interfere

¹ Nicoleta Stanca, Ovidius University Constanța, nicoletastanca1506@gmail.com.

with the Majesty's Government's right in the Irish Free State to modify, maintain or extend preferential treatment to any other state of the British Commonwealth.

The second letter was written in French by the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs G. G. Mironescu and sent to Mr. Palairet, with the English translation also included in the document I consulted. In reply to the initial letter dated Oct. 1, 1930, the Romanian Minister stated that the Romanian Government agreed to the proposals made by the representative of His Majesty's Government in the Irish Free State that based the conditions of reciprocity in article 36 of the Commercial Treaty between Great Britain and Romania. Both nations benefitted from the complete and unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment regarding imported/ exported goods produced and manufactured in the two countries.

The conclusion that one could reach at this point is that the two countries merely agreed to play by the rules already established through a treaty previously drawn between Great Britain (out of which Ireland freed itself in 1921 after the Anglo-Irish War 1919-1921) and Romania. In order to understand why neither of the two partners ventured into more significant economic relations, one must be aware of the historical background in these two parts of Europe. In the east, Romania was confronted with economic difficulties in the aftermath of WWI, the economy barely recovering in 1924. The year 1922-1923 was the first one with a positive exports balance for Romania since the Great War. The Romanian Governments in the interwar period oscillated between an "open gates" economic policy, favouring foreign investment, and a "through ourselves alone" policy, supporting Romanian investors. The Romanian economy was affected, like those of the other capitalist states, by the big crisis of 1929-1933. Nevertheless, the important change for Romania was that throughout these two decades, the 1920s and the 1930s, the country changed from a mainly agricultural one to an agricultural and industrial one before the WWII (Buzatu 93-100). In the west, The Irish Free State in the nationalist atmosphere after its independence showed opposition to "alien penetration" of the Irish economy, which was justifiable taking into account the centuries of Anglicization that they were trying to put behind. There was commitment in the 1930s to protecting Irish-owned manufacturing companies as an integral part of the state industrial policy (Connolly 212).

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Thus, the file in the National Archives of Ireland DFA/5/348/48, covering the 1930s, contains trade statistics, agreements, official correspondence and reports on the trade exchanges between the Irish Free State/ the Republic of Ireland and Romania. In chronological order, the first document in the file is the "Irish Statistics of the Irish-Romanian Trade 1927-1938":

Year	Imports (£)	Exports (£)
1927	7,712	41
1928	4,751	66
1929	14,946	4,169
1930	271,549	10,488
1931	42,340	152
1932	38,018	225
1933	68,703	32
1934	77,632	26
1935	86,470	358
1936	89,413	2,375
1937	88,976	32
1938	35,354	-

The file contains another statistic limited to the years 1934 and 1935. A third document in the file states that the trade relations between Ireland and Romania are governed by the Exchange of the Notes which took place in Oct. 1930, previously presented in this article. It also presents the figures for the balance of trade for the period 1935-1938. Unlike the chart above, probably drawn before the end of 1938, this document gives the following for the year 1938: (£) 63,697 (imports also mentioned in "Irish-Romanian Trade 1938": wheat, maize, wood, deals, planks, boards, gas and fuel oil, petroleum oil and other articles). For the year 1937, another document advances: £88,976 imports from Romania in planks and boards, seeds for oil, gas and fuel oil, petroleum lamp oil, motor spirit and other articles.

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For the year 1936, there is a brief "Report on the Foreign Trade Committee Meeting" held in the Department of Industry and Commerce, on 3rd February 1936, with members from the Department of Industry and Commerce, Department of External Affairs and Department of Agriculture. The discussion revolved around the matter of securing facilities for the entry into Romania of Irish Free State goods, including linen, yard and thread to the value of £50,000 to £70,000, but it was decided to postpone the question until the next meeting of the committee. For the same year, 1936, there is another document in the archival file, in two parts: 1) May 2nd, 1936, Bucharest and 2) May 28th, 1936, Bucharest. The agreement was concluded between the Governments of the UK and Romania to facilitate payments between the two countries, and since there was no other diplomatic representation of Romania in Ireland, except through London, this affected the trade between the Free State and Romania as well. For the UK it was signed by R. H. Hoare and for Romania by Dr. J. Costinescu. The technical document was signed from the Anglo-Romanian Clearing Office by A. E. Lee and from the National Bank of Romania by M. Constantinescu and D. N. Jordan.

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An eighth document in the National Archives of Ireland file DFA/5/348/48 focuses on the 1938 “Report of the Meeting of the Department of Industry and Commerce, the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Agriculture on the subject of trade relations between Eire and Yugoslavia, Hungary and Romania” and the possibility of concluding satisfactory arrangements with those countries for imports and payment for Irish goods. The meeting used memoranda on the trade relations between Eire and each country and also sought Payments Agreements concluded with each of the three countries on the lines of the Irish-Turkish Trade and Payment Agreement of October 1st, 1936. They prove there was interest of investing in the region.

In a letter by the Secretary from the Department of External Affairs, 29th Oct. 1938, to the Department of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, it is stated that a copy of a letter was forwarded, having been received from Senator J. J. Parkinson, regarding the conclusion of a Trade and Payments Agreement with Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania. The senator had telephoned to ask whether it would be possible to have such arrangements with these countries. The senator was informed that the matter would be addressed at an early meeting of the Foreign Trade Committee. In the letter sent by Senator J. J. Parkinson, Co. Kildare on 21st November 1938, he mentions he would appreciate A Gentleman’s Agreement between Ireland and Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Romania, as he would like to sell a good number of thorough-bred horses to the four countries and a proper trade agreement would facilitate such transactions. In the “Foreign Trade Committee Meeting”, 7th December 1938, in the Department of Industry and Commerce – the participants: Messrs. Ferguson, Duggan and Dillon from the Department of Department of Industry and Commerce, Mr. Egan from the Department of External Affairs and Messrs. McGrath and Hughes from the Department of Agriculture considered the question raised by the senator for the need to establish provisions of import and currency facilities for the trade with the four mentioned countries and the conclusion was that satisfactory agreements had to be reached with each of the countries involved.

Below I will offer details on the “Memorandum of Irish-Romanian Trade,” concluded in the Department of Industry and Commerce, 31st December 1938. Trade relations between Ireland and Romania worked on the basis of the unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment (according to the Exchange of Notes between the two countries in Oct. 1930). The balance of trade weighed heavily in favour of Romania, as noticed from the statistics provided by the archival file and presented before. With the exception of the year 1936 (wool, raw £2,188) and the exports of agricultural products in 1929 and 1930, the Irish exports to Romania had been negligible. It might be possible that Irish goods reached Romania through the UK or other third country but this was not significant in the context of stringent import-export regulations in Romania. The import regime in Romania was completely controlled. Trade on a compensation basis was also regulated. The main imports

from Romanian into Ireland included deals, planks, boards and mineral oil. Besides the strict regulations of the Romanian authorities of trade connections, another factor that prevented the development of better economic links was the economic domination of Germany in the South-east European countries.

There were attempts to strengthen the trade ties between the two countries. For instance, an inquiry was made by a firm in Bucharest to the Irish Thread Manufacturing Co. Ltd., in Dublin, in 1935 as to import 500,000 lbs. of linen, thread and yarn to a value of £50-70,000 on a compensation basis (payment to be made by export of Romanian goods to Ireland to the equivalent value). But the existing trade provisions did not offer any opportunity for such trade. The second example is that of Senator J. J. Parkinson's question about the possibility of selling horses to Romania and therefore, the necessity of an agreement meant to facilitate such trade between the two countries. The Memorandum stated that the most recent information on the markets in Romania showed interest for the following goods to be exported from Ireland: wool-raw, wool-washed, wool-combed, woollen piece goods, cotton piece goods, tablecloths, table napkins of any other material except silk, hides and skins (raw, salted and dried), flax yarns and shoemaker's thread, herrings.

The Irish authorities considered securing a certain measure of equality in the trade exchanges between the two countries through the possibility of securing a quid pro quo for imports of Romanian oil and petrol. But apart from petroleum lamp oil (less than 20% of the total imports from Romania), Romania was not a substantial supplier of oil to Ireland. The necessity of a bilateral trading and payment agreement with Romania to encourage a freer flow of goods seemed necessary. It was also mentioned that there were payments agreements with the UK. A similar trade agreement had to be concluded with Ireland whereby import and currency facilities would be granted in respect of Irish goods exported to Romania in proportion to Irish purchases of Romanian goods.

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There is further correspondence in 1939 at the beginning of the year, January 1939, between the Department of Industry and Commerce and the Department of External Affairs on the talks in the Foreign Trade Committee Meetings of 1938 and the Memoranda concerning trade relations between Ireland and Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. Another "Foreign Trade Meeting" was held on June 22nd 1939 in the Department of Industry and Commerce, Dublin, regarding trade with Romania, Hungary and Yugoslavia. The Foreign Trade Committee had decided before that if there was evidence that an export trade to any of these countries was likely to follow then a payments agreement was to be concluded. But the committee had no definite evidence of any increased export trade to any of these countries. It did not seem that any of the Irish firms normally carrying on an export trade in woollen piece goods, poplin, etc. would be interested in these markets nor that Senator Parkinson would

be able to sell horse there. However, in order to meet such requirements as those of Senator Parkinson and those from the Chamber of International Trade, the Committee recommended that the Department of External Affairs explored the possibility of concluding commercial agreements with those countries.

The National Archives of Ireland DFA/5/348/48 file further included an exchange of official letters between the Department of External Affairs, that of Agriculture and that of Industry and Commerce, stating that the respective ministers in charge approved of the recommendations of the Committee relative to the proposed trade negotiations between Ireland and Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary. The last document in the file was not very hopeful about a future development of trade links between Ireland and Romania. It is sent from the Irish Legation in Brussels (30th April 1947) to the Department of External Affairs. It tells about a visit from the representative of the firm C. J. Van Beek, Amsterdam, to Mr. John D. C. Van de Jewel, Netherlands, consul at Timișoara, about the chances for trade between Ireland and Romania. The difficulties related to the sterling were not acceptable in Romania. Cattle and raw wool could be sent by Ireland and Romania could send wood and oil. But it was very unlikely to happen. The letter was signed by William P. Fay, chargé d'affaires.

It seems, upon consulting the files presented above, that trade negotiations between Ireland and Romania in the 1930s advanced with difficulty for the reasons exposed in connection to each document, and it all must have come to an abrupt stop for the WWII period.

2. Irish-Romanian Trade 1968-1974

In Ireland, the commercial policy changed after WWII and in 1949 the Irish Republic established the Industrial Development Authority to attract overseas investors. And in 1956 and 1957 investors were even offered tax concessions, thus foreign investment making a significant contribution to economic growth and exports in Ireland (Connolly 212). Economic development was based on infrastructural projects and free-trading policies (Connolly 176). In Romania, in the aftermath of WWII, the 1950s and the 1960s are marked by the excesses of the communist regime (with forced industrialization and nationalization, collectivization of agriculture, a centralized economy, censorship and repression), which seemed to have taken a slightly more western path with the access to power of Nicolae Ceaușescu (President of the Socialist Republic of Romania 1974-1989, who hoped to strengthen national economy and portray Romania as an arbiter of international peace), as it will come out from the archival documents included in this article.

The next chronological reference to the trade between Romania and Ireland comes from the National Archives of Ireland, File DFA/2013/27/219, covering the late 1960s and the 1970s. There is a document on “Trade with Romania”, dated June 4th,

1968, stating that the trade with Romania has been of very small proportion in recent years. There were no exports for 1963-1966 and they amounted to only £19,000 in 1967, consisting of office machines and parts. A commercial agreement providing for the most-favoured-nation treatment had been signed with Romania in 1930, but since Romania was carrying its trade through state trading organizations, it was of little value. Romanian goods were admitted to Ireland at the full tariff rate.

Two days later, on June 6, 1968, as it comes out of the same file, a "Trade with Romania Meeting" took place, bringing together Mr. A. Ioncica, commercial counsellor from the Romanian Embassy in London and Mr. J. Donovan and Mr. T. Wardlaw from the Department of Industry and Commerce. Mr. Ioncica stated that Romanians were prepared to discuss possibilities of developing trade relations. One of the difficulties was that Romania, like Ireland, was an exporter of agricultural products not an importer. He had informed, upon a previous visit to Ireland, in 1967, trade corporations and machinery corporations about their visits to various factories and discussions about possible Irish partners (e.g. Shannon Free Zone, the Woolcombers Ltd., Unidare). Mr. Donovan, in his turn, showed the concern that there still was an imbalance in the Irish trade with Romania and that the Irish exporters found it difficult to sell to state-trading countries. Mr. Ioncica mentioned a new foreign trade corporation, Mercur of Bucharest, for buying and selling to foreign countries. Mr. Donovan replied that foreign trade in Ireland was in private hands and it would be easier to work on similar terms in Romania but he was willing to inform about Mercur. Mr. Ioncica finally suggested that if the Irish firms had queries about trade with Romania they should address the Commercial Office of the Romanian Embassy in London.

A third document from the same year, dated 7th June 1968, shows an excerpt from the *Irish Times* article "Romanians in Dublin for Trade Talks". The Romanian Ambassador to London, Mr. Vasile Pungan, came to Dublin at the invitation of the Department of Industry and Commerce, accompanied by the director of the Romanian tourist office in London, Mr. Oresti Ungureanu, and by the commercial counsellor, Mr. Aurel Ioncica. It was stated that it was the first official business visit of an Ambassador from Communist Romania to Dublin. The purpose of the visit was the expansion of trading links with Ireland taking into account that the figures for the previous year showed more than £500,000 worth of goods sold by Romania to Ireland and only £19,000 worth of Irish goods to Romania. So the Romanian officials were welcomed at the Department of External Affairs by the Minister, Mr. Aiken, and at the foreign section of the Department of Industry and Commerce. Mr. Pungan also met Irish businessmen and Mr. Ungureanu called on travel agencies to intensify the flow of Irish tourists to Romania.

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For the year 1970, I have traced a document in the same file, DFA/2013/27/219, "Trade with Romania" in six points (October 1970). There are the figures for imports and exports for 1964-1970 (1964: £130,000 imports, no exports; 1965: £140,000 imports, no exports; 1966: £80,000 imports, no exports; 1967: £542,000 imports, £19,000 exports, 1968: £564,000 imports, £7,000 exports, 1969: £586,000 imports, £70,000 exports, 1970 (January-August): £485,000 imports, £30,000 exports). Secondly, the trade was at low level and the balance was in Romania's favour. In 1969, the Irish imported polyvinyl, chloride, vegetable oils and fats from Romania and they exported dried and powdered milk and sheep and lamb's wool to Romania. It appeared that Romania's trade with the West was expanding, comprising 40-50% of our imports and Romania was breaking away from the constrictions of COMECON economic blow (an organization meant to coordinate the economies of the Eastern countries belonging to the Soviet bloc, 1949-1989) in accordance with the increasingly independent line the Romanians were taking in foreign policy.

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In the National Archives of Ireland File DFA/2008/79/202, I have identified a single document of 1971, but a very important one, which seemed to set the basis for a better economic cooperation between Ireland and Romania, namely the "Trade Agreement between Ireland and the Socialist Republic of Romania", Dublin, July 20th, 1971, presented to the Dáil Éireann by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (entered into force on 30th September 1971). It is an agreement in ten points. The agreement was to remain in force until December 31st, 1971 and it was considered automatically renewed by either party; it was signed by P.J. Hillary from the Government of Ireland and by P. Popa from the Government of the Socialist Republic of Romania.

The two governments aimed at a common "securing a harmonious development of trade". The two countries would consider the two respective lists of products for import from the other country (Schedule A and Schedule B). They would accord each other unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment. The representatives of the two governments would meet once a year to examine the trade between the two and consider the progress. They would facilitate each other's participation in trade fairs. Businessmen and representatives would enjoy full freedom of contact with authorities and firms in the other country. The trade would be based on contacts between the Romanian foreign trade enterprises and corporations and physical and legal persons in Ireland. Payments would be made in Irish currency, sterling or any other convertible currency.

Schedule A – Exports of goods from Romania

1. Fresh fruits and vegetables
2. Dried and frozen fruits and vegetables
3. Fruit and vegetable preserves
4. Cereals and seeds

5. Vegetable oils and animal fats
6. Wine and other alcoholic drinks
7. Textile products – yarn, fabrics, knitted goods, clothing, carpets
8. Gloves and footwear
9. Hardboard and plywood
10. Furniture and wooden articles
11. Toys and handicrafts
12. Porcelain and glassware
13. Fertilisers
14. Dyes
15. Chemicals
16. Medicines
17. Oil and petrochemical products
18. Products of electrotechnics and electronics
19. Complete industrial installations
20. Tractors and cars
21. Railway trucks
22. Agricultural equipment
23. Machine tools
24. Ships and ship equipment
25. Ferrous and non-ferrous metals and articles
26. Miscellaneous goods

Schedule B – Exports of goods from Ireland

1. Live animals and cattle semen
2. Meat and meat products
3. Wool, hides and skins
4. Dairy products and calf milk replacers
5. Fish and fish products
6. Potatoes for sowing
7. Other food products
8. Beer, whiskey and other drinks
9. Textile products – yarns, fabrics, knitted goods, clothing, carpets, ropes and twines
10. Leather and footwear
11. Ores, concentrates, metal and metal products
12. Building materials and equipments including PVC pipes and fittings and veneers
13. Refractory materials – powders for furnace maintenance
14. Lifting and loading equipment: building cranes and small container cranes, fork lift trucks, containers
15. Agricultural machinery, drilling equipment, screens, pumps and filters
16. Electronic equipment and telecommunications
17. Precision tools and appliances, measuring devices
18. Hospital and medical equipment
19. Industrial sealants and adhesives

20. Pharmaceuticals
21. Ships
22. Car tyres and tubes
23. Household appliances and utensils, oil heaters
24. Sporting goods (bowling alley equipment)
25. Razor blades, spectacle frames, stationery and view cards
26. Miscellaneous goods

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Back to File DFA/2013/27/219, it covers the next year, 1972, through two documents. The first one, "Trade with Romania", dated May 17th 1972, mentions the Trade Agreement between the two countries concluded the previous year and gives the figures for the imports and exports for 1970 (imports from Romania £979,000, exports to Romania £49,000) and 1971 (imports from Romania £319,000, exports to Romania £126,000). The imports consisted mainly in: plastics, sunflower seed oil, maize, plywood and vegetables and the exports in: lifting and leading machinery, receivers and transmitters, sheep and lambs' wool and inorganic chemicals. We find out details on the relation between Romania and the EEC (European Economic Community). Romania was not a member, but the Community agreed not to increase levies on imports of certain agricultural products from Romania. Romania requested that it should be included in the EEC's scheme of generalized preferences for developing countries, so that was agreed to be done, subject to the exclusion of farm products, textiles, footwear, steel products and other sensitive products.

The second 1972 document in the file is an interesting press release of October 18th, 1972 titled "Irish Products Shown in Bucharest" and it presents the Irish participation in a trade fair in Romania. Mr. J.T. Godfry, Assistant Secretary (Foreign Trade), Department of Industry and Commerce spoke at "Ireland Day" in the Bucharest International Fair, at a reception marking Ireland's first participation in the Fair, where 17 firms in the technical and engineering sector were represented in the display organized by Coras Trachtala/ Irish Board Export. Mr. Godfry stated that the expectations were that some of the Irish products displayed were among the most advanced in their fields, so of much interest to Romanian scientists and technologists. Ireland's participation was one of a trade fairs tour of promotions in Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Romania and part of an "Irish Technical Week" in Budapest, organized in May-October 1972.

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The DFA/2008/79/203 file contains seven documents from the years 1973 and 1974. From 1973 the first one is on the "Trade with Romania" listing the principal commodities of the year:

Imports (in £):

- tomatoes – 6,000
- synthetic rubber and rubber substitutes – 76,314

- lumber sewn lengthwise etc., non-conifer – 6,079
- coal – 43,933
- sunflower seed oil – 118,281
- phosphites, thypothespites and phosphates – 116,782
- vitamins and provitamins – 1,075
- rubber tyres and tubes for vehicles and aircraft – 3,058
- plywood etc., and veneer panels, inlaid wood – 105,228
- household utensils of wood – 1,061
- drawn or blown glass, unworked – 15,434
- tractors, other than road tractors – 554,756
- furniture and parts thereof – 66,289
- travel goods, handlings, etc. – 3,270
- footwear with soles of leather – 1,341
- toys – 7,402

Exports (in £):

- bovine and equine hides, except calf and hip skins – 96,828
- sheep's and lamb's wool, greasy and fleece-washed – 161,372
- sheep's and lamb's wool, degreased – 32,863
- knitted and crocheted fabrics not elastic nor rubberized – 15,114
- insulated wire and cable – 24,000

Of the same year, 1973, the same archival file, DFA/2008/79/203, includes a letter dated July 25th, 1973. This is diplomatic correspondence about arranging a visit of the Irish Foreign Minister to Romania. The Romanian counsellor at the Romania Embassy in London, Mr. Tilinca, mentioned that the two foreign ministers had met at Helsinki and that they would meet again in New York at the opening of the U.N. General Assembly. Mr. Tilinca also thanked the Irish for their helpful attitude towards the Romanian application for inclusion in the EEC arrangements for generalized preferences. Mr. Tilinca expressed the wish that Ireland might not overlook Romania in terms of diplomatic relations as the latter had taken an independent line among the “socialist countries”. He mentioned Romania had diplomatic relations with all the countries in Europe except for Ireland and Portugal. In general, the impression was that Romanians were suspicious of Russian intentions, about which they warned the Western countries as well.

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The DFA/2008/79/203 file is completed with more documents from 1974. For instance, there is “Ireland/ Romania Trade 1970-1974” giving statistics: 1970 – imports: £797,294, exports: £47,216; 1971 – imports: £318,672, exports: £125,632; 1972 – imports: £806,136, exports: £165,476; 1973 - imports: £1.199,467, exports:

£330,601; January-August 1974 – imports: £575,192, exports: £104,759. To add more detailed examples, from October 25, 1974, there is a “List of Irish goods imported in the Socialist Republic of Romania in 1973 and the first 7 months of 1974”: industrial diamonds, forging tools, hides and coarse wool, and a “List of Romanian goods exported to the Republic of Ireland in 1973 and the first 7 months of 1974”: tractors, plywood, furniture, occasional furniture, window glasses, cotton fabrics, leather goods.

The same file also comprises official correspondence between the Department of Industry and Commerce and the Department of External Affairs about the Statistics needed for the forthcoming trade review talks between Ireland and Romania in November 1974 in Bucharest. The last document in the DFA/2008/79/203 file is “Ireland/ Romania Talks: Trade and Cooperation Agreement in Bucharest, 5-8 November 1974”. The Irish delegation had members from the Department of Industry and Commerce (Mr. J. Lowe, the leader of the delegation), the Department for Foreign Affairs and Coras Trachtala (Enterprise Ireland). The Romanian delegation was made up of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Trade (Mr. A. Gheorghiu) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The talks lasted 3 days and a half (trade 1 and a half and cooperation 2 days). The report is divided into 2 parts: I. Talks on trade matters and II. Cooperation talks.

Part I. Talks on trade matters. General review of the Ireland/ Romania Trade

The two sides had exchanged statistic. The main reason for the discrepancy in figures was that a high proportion of Ireland’s imports was made through British and continental intermediaries. Mr. Lowe was anxious that the imbalance in the trade should be corrected by means of increased Irish exports to Romania. He mentioned the visit of an Irish Trade Mission to Romania in March 1974 and the Bucharest Fair participation in October 1974; the participation cost was £19,000 and the Irish firms received orders to the values of £38,000. Mr. Gheorghiu considered that further commercial activity was necessary and maybe frequent visits of Irish businessmen and a resident representation in Romania would help.

Efforts of particular Irish firms. Coras Trachtala focused on six Irish forms interested in trade links: Telectorn Ltd., Data Products (Dublin) Memories Ltd., SPS International Ltd., CMC Klebetechnik (Ireland) Ltd., Reliance Precision Products (Ireland) Ltd. and Technician International Ltd. Mr. Gheorghiu asked matters arising in the cooperation field be brought to his personal attention in the future. Mr. Chirica (from the Department of Foreign Trade) informed of the goods the Foreign Organization would be interested in purchasing from Ireland: industrial diamonds, wool, equipment for laboratories (chemical and industrial), skins, adhesives, and knitting needles.

Question of Romanian Trade Mission to Ireland. Romanian knowledge of the Irish market could be broadened through a well-prepared trade mission to Ireland.

Question of a Romanian Trade Representative in Ireland. Romania was not prepared in this respect because trade officers abroad had to have diplomatic privileges. This issue was bound with the larger issue of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Record of discussions. There were two main areas of difficulty: a) the desire of the Romanians that the Record should say Ireland as from January 1st 1975 eliminated all discriminatory quantitative restrictions against Romania in accordance with the Protocol for the Accession of Romania to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, 1947); that would be considered by Ireland in a EEC context; b) the wish of the Romanian side that the Record should say Ireland would favourably consider the improvement of the generalized scheme of preferences from January 1st 1975; the Irish delegation noted the wish of the Romania delegation.

The Irish delegation secured a number of provisions in the Record considered potentially useful to their export effort to the Romanian market: decrease imbalance, expand trade and a Romanian Trade Mission to Ireland.

II. Part II. Cooperation Talks

Background. Romanian and Irish Drafts of a cooperation agreement had been prepared and exchanged. The Irish had questions regarding the use of “economic collaboration” in the title of the Romania draft as it seemed far wide as to the scope of such an agreement. Romanians agreed to provide clarifications in writing through the Romanian Embassy in England.

Preambles to the Draft Agreements. The first heading of the Irish Draft stated “mutually advantageous” proposed by Romanians was not acceptable as it did not imply equality of advantage; they suggested “...under conditions of reciprocity which assure equivalence of advantages and obligations”. In the 2nd heading Romanians wanted “technical” replaced with “technological” as in Romanian it meant a specifically defined level of technique. In the 3rd and 4th headings, it was mentioned that bilateral trade agreements with State Trading Countries are incompatible with EEC common commercial policy. The 5th heading of the Romanian Draft and the 3rd heading of the Irish Draft needed rewording in such as way as the two parties agreed.

The Romanian Draft as a reference document triggered discussions. Article 1 was similar, taking into account the Romanian understanding of “collaboration”. Article 2 – EEC obligations are mentioned by the Irish; the most-favoured-nation treatment could not be included in a cooperation agreement. Article 3 – the Irish did not agree

with the reference to exemption from customs duties of mutual deliveries of goods under cooperation deals or the reference to the restrictions on mutual deliveries of goods. Article 4 - There was no disagreement about the forms of cooperation. Article 5 dealt with forms of cooperation. Article 6 referred to guarantees by each country of the capital investment of its firm participating in Joint Ventures, in order to create confidence in the minds of potential participants in joint projects, stated the Romanians. For instance, an Irish company might want assurance from the Irish government it would not lose their investment. The Romanians said Irish companies would be accepted without such guarantees and in case of a legal dispute, the Irish asked, if arbitration in a third country was permitted, which the Romanians accepted. Article 6 also stated the avoidance of double taxation by each country of profits of a joint venture firm from the activity in the territory of the other country; the Irish mentioned that a separate agreement could be considered for double taxation. Article 7 – the scope of this article was considered wide and inappropriate for inclusion in a cooperation agreement. “In the field of land, maritime and air transports, the contacting parties apply to each other the most-favoured-nation treatment. The two parties shall mutually ensure the free transit of goods on their territories”; the Irish said air traffic was controlled by the aeronautical authorities and for sea control the Government was responsible. For Article 8 there were no differences. In Article 9 the objective of Romanians was to provide that finance for cooperation schemes would be available at favourable rates and Romanians agreed to provide additional information through the Embassy in London. The remaining articles 10-13 (Romanian Draft)/ 7-10 (Irish Draft) were similar with the exception of “economic collaboration” and “technical cooperation”, which needed clarifications.

In conclusion, the Romanians confirmed that information would be passed on to the Irish side in writing through the Embassy in London and that negotiations on a long-term agreement between the two countries would be resumed at a later date.

3. Irish-Romanian Trade 1975-1987

National Archives of Ireland DFA/2013/27/219 file offers information starting with 1975. In the “Trade with Romania”, there are the figures for 1972-1975: 1972 – exports: £165,476, imports: £806,136; 1973 – exports: £330,601, imports: £1,199,467; 1974 - exports: £114,370, imports: £1,178,225; 1975 (provisional) - exports: £104,532, imports: £990,681.

Another document from the same period labels the trade between Ireland and Romania as “very small” and “confined to a narrow range of goods which have tended to fluctuate since the beginning of 1976”. The exports were negligible, with an unfavourable balance for Ireland and the main products imported were: tractors, plywood, lumber, furniture and fertilizers.

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There is a third document in the file on “Ireland/ Romania Trade” 1972-1976. The figures added cover 1975 - exports: £104,532, imports: £1.065,052 and 1976 (Jan.-Sept.) - exports: £55,432, imports: £1.368,175 and the forecast for the rest of 1976 - exports: £73,000, imports: £1.768,000. The principal commodities traded were: Imports: natural honey; synthetic rubber substitutes; non-conifer sawn lengthwise; sunflower seed oil; sodium carbonate; nitrogenous fertilizer; plastic materials; plywood and inlaid woods; reconstituted wood; cotton bleached and dyed; steel; agricultural tractors; harvesting machinery; furniture; travel goods; footwear. Exports: starches insulin; leather; clothing knitted; cordage, ropes and twines.

DFA/2013/27/219 also file contains diplomatic exchanges dated 1976 regarding commercial links between the two countries. There is a letter about a visit of the Ambassador of Romania. The Romanian diplomat expressed disappointment at the failure to make progress on the Cooperation Agreement. He added that the drafts had been moved from the Department of Industry and Commerce to the Department of Foreign Affairs, which must have made things even more difficult. The Romanian Ambassador added that the authorities in our country were interested in establishing diplomatic relations. In this sense, he mentioned the invitation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to visit Romania; he mentioned that if the Irish Minister could not visit Romania in 1976, the Romanian Minister might come to Ireland if invited. Finally, the Ambassador made a passing remark to the opening of a Trade Office in Dublin to help trade between the two countries.

The archives kept another letter of December 6, 1976, sent to a Mr. J. Brosnan, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (in the Department of Industry and Commerce), concerning the contacts over the previous months with the Romanian Embassy in London about the prospects of an Irish-Romanian Cooperation Agreement. The Economic Counsellor at the London Embassy reported that a meeting would take place between officials of the Irish Embassy, a representative of CTT's London Office and Romanian Embassy officials on 13th December in London. The purpose was to find ways to expand Irish-Romanian trade. The Romanians asked for a list of products the Irish would be in a position to offer, so the Embassy needed documents to offer from the Department of Industry and Commerce.

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A “Trade with Romania” document from 1977 is included in the same National Archives of Ireland DFA/2013/27/219 file. It gives the principal exports for the year: £1.263,614 and the principal imports for the year: £2.001,819. The products exported: miscellaneous food preparations; manganese oxides; air conditioning machinery; refrigerating equipment. The products imported: dried fruit; synthetic rubber and substitutes; polymerization, copolymerization products; rubber tyres and tubes; plywood, blockwood, veneered panels and inlaid wood; reconstituted wood;

safety glass, toughened, laminated; iron and steel springs and spring leaves; agricultural tractors; machinery and appliances; passenger cars; trucks, vans, lorries; chairs, other seats and parts; furniture and parts; travel goods handbags, etc.; rubber plastic and leather soled footwear. The statistic for the period adds in another "Irish-Trade with Romania" document provisional figures for 1978: exports: £2,044,122 and imports: £916,336. The final figures for 1978 are contained in the next year's statistic: 1978: exports: £2,631,607 and imports: £1,365,102. The same for 1979: exports: £1,982,000 and imports: £1,552,000 and some provisional figures for 1980: exports: £32,000 and imports: £215,000.

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The most interesting document in the National Archives of Ireland DFA/2013/27/219 file, dated April 25, 1978, is the report on "The Informal Visit of President Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918-1989) to Shannon, April 11, 1978". President Ceaușescu was on his way to the US and stopped for a 90-minute visit at Shannon. His visit followed that of Tito's (1892-1980, former President of Yugoslavia), on March 6, 1978, also on his way to America. Ceaușescu had passed through Shannon before (in 1969) without a ceremony, but this time the Foreign Ministry/ the Embassy suggested talks with the Irish Government in the context of the post Helsinki Accords (1975) period when bilateral talks were a common feature. The President and his wife were greeted on the aircraft steps, accompanied to where the Guard of Honour was drawn up, the Romanian Anthem and the Soldier's Song played and the Guard inspected. Then the guests were conducted to a lounge where they were offered refreshments.

The conversation (with translation) touched upon two points: the Middle East situation and the current state and prospects of European relations. On the Middle East: though far from the area of conflict, Ireland was concerned as they might have been asked to send troops to participate in the UN force in South Lebanon, through UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, created in 1978), which actually happened. Romania seemed reluctant about UNIFIL, yet the President was concerned with the Middle East situation being closer to the area. The peace process begun by Anwar Sadat (1918-1981, President of Egypt) with Israel was in impasse because of Menachem Begin (1913-1992, Prime Minister of Israel) and his intransigence; the Israeli incursion into South Lebanon made things worse. Ceaușescu was optimistic about the resumption of the peace process by a meeting under the auspices of the UN Secretary General and through bilateral talks between Israel and Egypt. The Irish Minister remarked that in his conversation with President Tito, the latter mentioned that Sedat should have consulted with the other Arabs. Ceaușescu agreed on this point but considered Sedat's gesture a correct one to speed the peace process. The Minister was encouraged by Ceaușescu's optimism in view of the latter's active role in promoting bilateral contacts in the peace process and in American he would follow through on Sedat's initiative.

Secondly, on CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) and détente, the Irish Minister considered that the Document emerging from the Belgrade meeting (1977-1978) was meagre but there was hope for the Madrid meeting in 1980. The Minister also appreciated the active and independent role Romanian played in the CSCE process. Ceaușescu mentioned the unsatisfactory results of the Belgrade meeting because of the current US-Soviet differences. He stated that, in preparation for the Madrid meeting, international and direct relations should be considered among European states, though he did not insist on the question of Romanian-Irish diplomatic relations. The Minister, in turn, without referring to diplomatic relations, agreed that political and economic contacts with Romanian should intensify. The Minister had hopes for the forthcoming UN Special Session on Disarmament. Ceaușescu, on the contrary, was sceptical about the results, though Romania was a member of the preparatory committee. On bilateral relations, the Romanian President advocated an intensification of them in the “political, economic and other fields” and hoped the respective Foreign Ministries would be busy in this regard. The Irish Minister was impressed with the ambitious goals Romania had set for itself and praised Ceaușescu’s wish for improvement in Romania-EEC relations. The Minister mentioned that the example of Shannon Airport and its surrounding manufacturing and resident area could give the President some impressions of the Irish efforts to promote social and economic expansion. Thus, the President and his party had a brief tour of the Airport shops and the industrial zone before leaving. Before departing, the President invited the Minister to visit Romania and the Romanian Ambassador in London, present at the meeting, raised the question of diplomatic relations, which showed the fact that the issue of non-residential embassies would be pursued in the near future. The document was dictated by P. MacKernan and initialled in his absence.

The Romanian official newspaper *Scinteia*, which used to cover all the political events in the Romania under communism, devotes a section of an article to the Shannon event. The article (dated April 12, 1978) is titled “President Nicolae Ceaușescu left for a State Visit to the US.” The visit was at the invitation of President Jimmy Carter. The Romanian President was accompanied by his wife and an official delegation: Gheorghe Oprea, vice-PM; Ștefan Andrei, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Vasile Pungan, Head of President’s Counsellors; Ioan Avram, Minister of Industry and Machinery Construction. It is also mentioned that a larger official delegation bid farewell from the President and that thousands of ordinary Romanian citizens were also present at the airport to wish the presidential couple a prosperous talks in America.

The article in *Scinteia* contains a “Shannon Stopover” event subheading. The stopover at the Irish international airport is devoted a subsection. Romanian flags adorned Shannon Airport for the occasion. The Romanian President and his party were greeted, on behalf of the Irish President Patrick Hillery and of the Irish Government, by Michael O’Kennedy, Minister of Foreign Affairs; John Burke,

Director of European Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; representatives of local authorities and the Romanian Ambassador in London, Pretor Popa. The official protocol for a president's visit is mentioned. The talks, in a friendly atmosphere, cover issues from bilateral relations, to security and cooperation in Europe to peace in the Middle East, issue that seem to have preoccupied President Ceaușescu a lot at the time. The party then briefly visited Shannon industrial area and the President signed in the Airport Book of Honour. The Romanian article also give information on President Ceaușescu's press declarations for the local journalists, expressing hopes for stronger ties between the two countries, based on the industry and bravery of the Irish people, which are also characteristics of the Romanian nation, according to the President. In the end, he wished the Irish peace, prosperity and well-being. The Irish officials, in their turn, wished the Romanian delegation a successful visit in the US.

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The last file traced in the National Archives of Ireland, DFA/2017/4/474, on the economic relations between Ireland and Romania includes two documents. The first one is a document from the Irish Embassy in London, "Confidential, July 3, 1987". First Secretary R. J. Townsend had lunch the previous day with the Political Counsellor at the Romanian Embassy, Mr. Chiujdea, at his invitation, as they did not have a great deal of contact with the Romanians, here is what was discussed:

Middle East: There was a lengthy discussion on projects for convening an international peace conference on the Middle East; Romanians were unique among East-Europeans as they sought to maintain close relations with Israel and the Arab States.

East-West and Arms Control: A situation presented as improbable by the Secretary was that the US allegedly would transfer nuclear warheads to West German control, a move supported by Britain. The Romanians knew that from the Soviet Embassy in London.

Romania-USSR Relations: Mr. Chiujdea did not disguise the problems, some of them difficult to prove: the creation of difficulties for transportation of Romanian goods; difficulties with the Hungarian minority (the Soviets might have a hand in this); economic problems: the system of collective agriculture had to be modified and some heavy industrial plants built with Soviet assistance were inefficient and obsolete and had to be closed down, which would trigger dislocation and unemployment; on foreign policy, Romania had relations with Israel, Afghanistan and it was isolated within the Warsaw Pact on these issues but other East European diplomats agreed (not publicly) with Romania's independent position; Soviet involvement in Romania had decreased over the previous 30 years, since the 1950s, when Soviet officials were present in all Ministries and there were no Russian troops

in Romania and no other Warsaw Pact forced participated in Romanian military manoeuvres.

The Gorbachev Reforms: Mr. Chiujdea was sceptical about a major transformation of the Soviet society. What would produce a change would be raising the low costs of essentials (housing, food, transport). For instance, the recent visit of Prime Minister Thatcher to USSR had little impact and the journalists who interviewed her on TV (he heard) were sacked.

Romania-Hungary Relations: Mr. Chiujdea denied any problem with the Hungarian minority and the matter had been discussed two weeks before in a meeting in Budapest.

Romania-FRG Relations: Mr. Chiujdea spoke warmly of the relations with the Federal Republic; there was considerable trade and other economic contact between the two countries and there had been a German community for centuries in Romania.

Relations with Britain: They were described as “good”. A Romanian parliamentary delegation was to visit Britain and the Romanian Foreign Minister would be visiting London that autumn. About the demonstration outside the Romanian Embassy the previous Monday, he said there were only 4 people protesting about an alleged arrest in Romania; they were pre-war exiles and were not representative of the Romanian community in Britain, counting around 3000 people then.

Relations with Ireland: Mr. Chiujdea said they were keen to increase trade with Ireland but did not indicate how. Such contacts were at a low level, which did not justify the establishment of diplomatic relations for the foreseeable future.

The second document in the DFA/2017/4/474 file, “Air Traffic Rights”, seems to be a response of the Air Authorities in Ireland to some Romanian requests in this sense. The existence of a bilateral air services agreement was a precondition for the exchange of international traffic rights. If Tarom was interested in establishing scheduled services to/ from Ireland, the Irish Authorities would be prepared to consider talks with the Romanian Authorities. Unless a satisfactory bilateral agreement was concluded, the Irish Air Authorities would not be able to grant Tarom any of the traffic rights requested.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the trade links between Ireland and Romania in the decades of the 20th century, as they presented in documents from the National Archives of Ireland, constantly strived for more but were usually at a low level mainly on account of political differences and dissimilar policies. The starting point in the 1930s was a trade agreement previously established with Britain and throughout the period there

were attempts to reach more direct links that would facilitate commerce between the two countries. In 1968, the year when there are documents available again after the WWII and its consequences, the difference seem even bigger: Ireland developed and opened its economy, which was in private hands, to foreign markets, whereas, in communist Romania, state centralization and control of foreign trade links were operating.

In the early 1970s, commercial relations were at a low level, but a Trade Agreement in 1971 and an Irish products exhibition in Bucharest in 1972 gave hopes for the future. Further trade talks were arranged between the two parties in 1973 and 1974; interestingly, it appeared that Romania had diplomatic relations in 1973, though a communist country, with all European countries, except for Ireland and Portugal.

Throughout 1975, 1976 and 1977, in spite of visits and talks, no further progress is registered in the statistics given by the archival documents; examples of products traded are offered and usually the balance weighed in favour of Romania. President Nicolae Ceaușescu's informal stopover at Shannon Airport in 1978 could have oiled the economic engine as the Romanian leader seemed open to establishing bilateral relations and developing the national economy. The last file traced and included in the analysis comes from 1987, when diplomatic exchanges reveal the same standstill: trade relations between Ireland and Romania were at a low point, which did not justify the conclusion of diplomatic relations.

Interestingly, since most of the documents contained in the National Archives of Ireland files on commercial links between Ireland and Romania represent official correspondence, reports of official meetings, agreements and statistics, they reveal more than trade figures and features; they draw attention to the economic policies and foreign politics of the two countries over the period mentioned and it becomes obvious why Ireland and Romania were not able to forge stronger bridges and ties in spite of keeping the appearances of openness and willingness.

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The author

Nicoleta Stanca is Associate Professor at Ovidius University Constanta. She has published five book-length studies: *Defiance of “Magdalenes.” Female challenges in Recent Irish Fiction* (2023), *Irish-Romanian Cultural Connections. Travellers, Writers and Ambassadors* (2019), *Mapping Ireland (Essays on Space and Place in Contemporary Irish Poetry)* (2014), *The Harp and the Pen (Tradition and Novelty in Modern Irish Writing)* (2013), *Duality of Vision in Seamus Heaney’s Writings* (2009), articles in academic journals and book chapters on Irish literary studies, Irish-American identity and popular culture. She is an alumna of the 2014 Multinational Institute of American Studies of New York University (NYU). She did research as a volunteer at the Embassy of Romania in Dublin (June 1-30, 2022).