

## ENTANGLED HISTORIES OF FEMINIST ADVOCACIES IN THE INTERWAR BALKANS AND CENTRAL EUROPE

MARIA BUCUR

### THE LITTLE ENTENTE OF WOMEN AND NATIONAL POLITICS IN INTERWAR ROMANIA: THE STRUGGLE FOR FEMINIST GOALS

In interwar Romania, feminism was entangled with nationalism and internationalism. The Little Entente of Women provided valuable connections with networks of powerful, successful women that could serve as a model and support the activities of feminists inside Romania. The Little Entente of Women could and did become also a space of exclusion controlled by the leaders of the Romanian founding group, and especially Alexandrina Cantacuzino. This presentation provides insights into the internal struggle for feminist goals inside Romania during the 1920s and 1930s, as related to the international connections provided by LEW and other interrelated international feminist groups and leaders. On the basis of correspondence in the Romanian archives, I have been able to identify personal and institutional conflicts that plagued Romanian feminist circles and weakened the ability of their leaders to successfully pursue their common goals for universal female suffrage and maternalist protections for women and children. From these letters, it is also apparent that feminists outside Romania—both in LEW and in other international feminist organizations—had very little understanding of (or interest in ascertaining) these conflicts and their toxic impact on feminist goals in Romania. In the end, women in Romania paid for these fights. Interwar Romanian feminism remained ineffectual and limited in its reach.

*The Cast of Characters: Alexandrina Cantacuzino, Elena Meissner, Maria Baiulescu*

(slide 2: photo of Cantacuzino, some ids) I have written elsewhere at length about Alexandrina Cantacuzino. Therefore, my presentation of her position and influence is simply a summary of my broader findings. Cantacuzino was unabashedly power hungry, with a sense of entitlement supported by her enormous wealth and the proper performance of her role of wife and mother prior to her launch in the feminist arena. She performed her Orthodox Christianity in garb and through her work with the National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women (SONFR—the Romanian acronym). She was ambitious and wanted to be the leader of any enterprise she was part of, including LEW. She spoke several languages (at least Romanian, English, French, and German, as far as I can ascertain). (slide 3:) She travelled extensively at conferences of every kind—feminist, literary, professional, diplomatic, peace, human trafficking, agricultural management, etc.—making her mark through severe dress (in garb, she performed widowhood continuously in the interwar period) and speeches that flaunted her erudition and respect for tradition.

Cantacuzino collected connections. Nothing shows it better than the albums of postcards, business cards, and Christmas cards she collected. (slide 4: images from album). Carefully displayed so that one could see both front and back -the aesthetics and the message- these albums suggest a practice of spending time first arranging these displays carefully, as a treasure that testified to Cantacuzino's impressive linguistic acumen and network of famous acquaintances. They also suggest a performative practice of showing these albums to others. Why would someone affix and cut out parts of pages from an album to display such cards, if not to make sure they could be seen by others in an orderly fashion? I imagine these bright red albums laid out on tables in Cantacuzino's apartments, by a cozy armchair and fireplace, ready to be picked up and perused by her frequent guests. Such albums would also perform the work of an evolving pedigree: upon seeing the names and messages in the albums, a guest may be more likely to want to become part of the collection for future viewers and leave their business card with a message; or better yet, send a Christmas card with a special message for future inclusion in the precious album. Not so sound too flippant, but these albums are akin to the FaceBook wall of many a people who collect followers: I see Cantacuzino as a pioneer influencer.

(slide 5: photo of her) Elena Meissner was an early leader in the Romanian feminist movement in Iasi, where she lived and worked many years. Born in 1867 (nine years before Alexandrina Cantacuzino), Meissner (nee Buznea) enjoyed the upbringing of a middle-class family with an interest in education. She was trained as a teacher and graduated from the prominent girls' Humpel pedagogical institute. (image of the school here? Or just same slide) The school had been established in 1871 at the initiative of prominent writer and politician Titu Maiorescu and historian A.D. Xenopol, and operated under the leadership of Maiorescu's sister, Emilia Humpel. Upon graduation, Meissner began working as a teacher and also pursued a university degree, becoming one of the first female graduates of University of Iasi, with a degree in Romanian literature. Meissner's early travels were oriented towards professional training—as director of a girls' professional school, she traveled to Sweden to gain better experience in textile work. The contrast with Cantacuzino's aristocratic background could not be greater: while Cantacuzino enjoyed a private education with tutors and inclusive of travels abroad in luxury, Meissner was a product of pioneering efforts (private and public) to broaden access to female students at all levels of education. The high school she attended was private, but University of Iasi was a public institution.

This experience shaped Meissner's activism and feminist ideas, which were oriented towards women's emancipation through education her whole life. She worked as a teacher and administrator at girls' schools until the age of 62. This active professional life shaped her activism as well. She modeled professional female engagement every day at work and encouraged others—teachers and students—to do the same. Her feminist circles included many teachers from around the country. She continued to

work after getting married and never stopped employment due to her marital status, something professional women in Romania were often expected to do. (next slide-photo of Constantin) But Meissner was married to Constantin Meissner, a man who was clearly her partner in life and not her master. In many of the letters she received from her feminist friends loving and admiring references to Constantin accompany their greetings to Elena, suggesting a household in which wife and husband were supportive of each other's quite separate professional lives.<sup>42</sup>

(next slide: their goals as educators) Meissner pursued similar goals as her husband as an overall purpose in her professional life: expanding educational opportunities for the rural population. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, before many other educated Romanians, they saw that one of the great deficits of Romanian society at that time was the absence of educational opportunities for the 90% of the population who lived in rural areas. Training teachers who would willingly choose to live in the countryside was an important focus. Getting the government or non-governmental organizations to put funding behind building schools and libraries in the countryside was another related focus. And getting the rural population to choose to send children to school at a time when the legislation neither obligated them, nor paid for enrollment taxes, was a third huge issue. It seems Elena and Constantin Meissner were primarily focused on the first two goals. Elena spent her life training female teachers in the hope that some would choose a rural school to pursue their professional life. Constantin worked first as a teacher in several boys and girls' schools, and subsequently produced textbooks to assist future teachers. After 1918, he drafted policy at the national level, meant to encourage the expansion of quality teaching practices in the countryside.

While this may not seem like an obvious feminist agenda, for the Meissners it was. They were products of access to education and saw the power it provided for individual boys and girls. They connected education to responsible citizenship: schools were a training ground for access to economic opportunity, social opportunity, as well as a sense of responsibility as citizens. Elena saw women's role in society in a maternalist feminist fashion—as moral guardians of the home—but also as partners of their male relatives and co-nationals, in effecting a society that empowered every individual to perform according to their potential. Elena Meissner was a liberal feminist whose ideas of rights and empowerment closely mirrored those of John Stuart Mill and Harriett Taylor. I should add that she never joined the Romanian National Liberal Party, which was staunchly opposed to women's suffrage throughout the interwar period.

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<sup>42</sup> Though Constantin Meissner was also an educator and education reformer, his professional path took him to Bucharest. He served in Parliament for several mandates under several parties, conservative or center-right. He worked at the Ministry of Education. He was appointed as Minister of Industry and Commerce in 1918, and as Minister of Public Works in 1927. Meissner was an able operator of the political class and pursued his goals of broadening education for the peasant class in a variety of governmental and non-governmental ways.

(image of poster of early suffrage) Elena Meissner began her political activism in 1918, as Romania was emerging out of the brutal war in which many women, especially in Iasi, where she lived, had participated actively in supporting the war effort in some capacity. As a co-founder of the Association for the Civil and Political Emancipation of Women in Romania (ACPEWR), she helped shape the goals of Romanian feminism at a time when universal suffrage was widely discussed. Cantacuzino gravitated towards feminism as an expression of her frustration with the lack of acknowledgement for the work she had been doing before and during the war; for Meissner the move towards suffrage rights was an extension of work for women's education that she had been actively pursuing as a professional for two decades.

Cantacuzino was not present at the founding of the ACPEWR, likely because the organization was founded in Iasi and Cantacuzino was in Bucharest at that time. (have a map of Romania in background of slide, with Iasi and Bucharest identified). But, the deeper reason for this absence is likely the different streams of social activism and cultural circles in which Meissner and Cantacuzino gravitated. (slide with Botez and Negruzzi) Calypso Botez, who later became very active in Romania's involvement with the LEW and was also from Bucharest, did participate in the founding meeting of ACPEWR, as did Ella Negruzzi, another prominent feminist from Bucharest. Though this is nowhere expressed in the founding documents, the difference between Botez and Negruzzi, on the one hand, and Cantacuzino, on the other, is the professional and academic credentials of the former. They were part of an emerging intellectual academic elite, based on their education, publications, and writing, something that Cantacuzino could not perform. Instead, she was a princess. From that point on, Meissner's relationship with Botez, Negruzzi, and eventually Maria Baiulescu continued to flourish into the late 1930s.<sup>43</sup> They conducted a rich correspondence, full of both warm emotions of love and friendship, as well as strong language about the conflict that developed between this group and the National Council of Romanian Women, which Cantacuzino directed from Bucharest. I return to this conflict shortly.

(next slide) The third important figure in this evolving relationship is Maria Baiulescu, who was born in 1860 in the Austro-Hungarian Transylvanian city of Brassó (after 1918, Brasov, part of Romania). She is the oldest of the three, and a generation older than Cantacuzino. Socially and culturally Baiulescu cuts an intermediary figure between the aristocratic Cantacuzino and the liberal Meissner. Baiulescu came from one of the most respected families (though hardly well-off) of the Romanian community in Brassó at that time. Her father had served as the first Romanian Orthodox Priest in the city after a prolonged dispute with the Greek Orthodox community there and after Archbishop

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<sup>43</sup> Elena Meissner died at the age of 73, in 1940.

Andrei Saguna had intervened to uphold Baiulescu's ecclesiastical authority.<sup>44</sup> During a period when the Romanian Orthodox Christian community was barely tolerated by the Habsburg authorities in many places, Baiulescu gained the reputation of a patriot and esteemed man of the cloth. A tireless organizer of the Romanian community in Brasso, he wrote many articles on uplifting his co-nationals, inclusive of women. At a time when few others, and especially clergymen, advocated explicitly for the professional education of women, he wrote about the need to prepare Romanian girls to become not only good mothers and wives, but also economically self-sufficient agents, through professional education.<sup>45</sup>

The Baiulescus never accumulated much wealth, but grew to have an elevated reputation of unquestioned patriotism in the Romanian nationalist movement in Transylvania, bolstered by Bartolomeu's esteemed position as a priest and teacher. Maria Baiulescu, his daughter, grew up in this atmosphere and was encouraged from early on to take an interest in education and public works. She attended first a German and subsequently French language school for girls, and became a polyglot, mastering four language, like Cantacuzino. Due to the misogynistic exclusionary politics of higher education in the late 1870s in the Habsburg Empire, she was able to pursue further study only in individualized, informal fashion. Baiulescu married and had a daughter who died young. She responded to this tragedy by dedicating her life to lively social and political activism.

She expressed her belief in the need for women's full equality with men already in 1896, marking her as one of the earliest figures of Romanian feminism, both inside the Habsburg Empire as well as more broadly in Romanian speaking circles. In 1896, her feminism had to be tied to the aspirations of the Romanian nationalist movement not only because her father was a leader in that movement. She was not recognized by German and Hungarian speaking feminists as a person of interest, as a potential ally, as a "sister." Never acknowledged by the leading feminists of her then country, she pursued her own path, which remained closely entwined with the Romanian nationalist movement, and thus implicitly anti-Hungarian. This early history marked her evolution as a feminist after Transylvania became part of Romania, in the 1920s.

Baiulescu became a vocal figure in a number of cultural and philanthropic organizations, which served as recruiting grounds for her feminist goals. (slide with

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<sup>44</sup> chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfendmkaj/  
[https://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/bitstream/123456789/87343/1/BCUCLUJ\\_FG\\_S2602\\_1938.pdf](https://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/bitstream/123456789/87343/1/BCUCLUJ_FG_S2602_1938.pdf);  
pp. 19-21.

<sup>45</sup> Bartolomeu Baiulescu, "Femeia romana in Transilvania," *Transilvania*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1895). As cited in chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfendmkaj/[https://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/bitstream/123456789/87343/1/BCUCLUJ\\_FG\\_S2602\\_1938.pdf](https://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/bitstream/123456789/87343/1/BCUCLUJ_FG_S2602_1938.pdf), pp. 48-49.

Astra; Red cross) She was active in the nationalist organization Astra, where her father was also a dynamic member. During World War I, when the Romanian army briefly entered in Transylvania in 1916, she helped organize a Red Cross chapter to assist the Romanian wounded. When the Central Powers pushed back the Romanian army, she fled to Iasi, sure that she would be imprisoned otherwise by the Austro-Hungarian authorities for her activities. This is also when she met many feminists from the Romanian kingdom, among them Elena Meissner and Olga Sturdza. Baiulescu worked in Iasi for the Red Cross until the end of World War I. She was in Iasi and in touch with Meissner and Sturdza at the founding of the ACPEWR.

Baiulescu's work for the Red Cross under the threat of retribution from the Central Powers might have created a sense of allyship, of solidarity with Alexandrina Cantacuzino, who managed a Red Cross hospital that helped Romanian POWs in Bucharest, during the occupation by the Central Powers. But such a bond never happened. Instead, due to a very public and nasty conflict in Iasi around the leadership of SONFR at the end of the war, various feminists and women's activists were forced to take sides with one or the other of the heads of the factions involved in this scandal: Cantacuzino was prevented by leaders of SONFR in Iasi, among them Olga Sturdza, from entering a SONFR building in Iasi, with the police in toe. (Image from the book Cantacuzino published) Insulted beyond reconciliation, she left and became lifelong enemies with those who offended her. Meissner and Baiulescu retained good relations with Sturdza and continued to work together on a number of philanthropic and social welfare initiatives, most prominently the Society for the Protection of War Orphans (SOOR—the Romanian acronym).

### *Conflicts among Interwar Romanian Suffragists*

Within this environment that became polarized around individual leaders and their ambitions, Romanian feminism suffered from fragmentation and in-fighting. Roxana Cheschebec has provided a nuanced and rich analysis of these struggles. I do not wish to rehearse her findings, only to confirm and amplify her excellent points by focusing on a couple of specific topics: (a) the conflict over participation in existing political parties; and (b) the use of international feminist allies to bolster specific positions in internal struggles over electoral strategies. I will start with noting that, reading Meissner's and Cantacuzino's speeches, one is struck by similarities and not differences. They made compatible points about the importance of securing the vote for women as a means to bring them more fully into the public life of the country. They both spoke about women's contributions during the war, their moral leadership in the home and society, and their contributions to shaping the cultural life of future generations as mothers. They made compatible points about the need to focus social assistance work on improving the economic conditions of working women, focusing on both the need for equal civil rights for married women, as well as the need for equal civil rights for children born out of wedlock. In short, seen from the outside, for

instance from the perspective of leaders in the LEW or the International Alliance for Suffrage, these two feminist leaders looked like allies and not competitors.

But Meissner and Cantacuzino never became allies. I will not speculate who initiated the conflict, as the archival sources I have had access to do not provide enough details to elucidate this issue. It is clear, however, that from the 1920s and into the late 1930s, these two feminist leaders remained at odds with each other. (slide with their correspondence) They exchanged some polite correspondence to explain their individual position and to reject accusations from the other of acting against the interest of Romanian feminists. More than that, they both acted constantly inside circles of followers and allies who reinforced the antagonism. (slide Calypso with the two—letters, and photos?) Calypso Botez seems to be a rare figure in this web of intrigue and antipathy. She worked with Cantacuzino as part of the National Council for Romanian Women and inside the LEW; and she also worked with Meissner in supporting her position on political affiliation with existing parties. Others preferred to build their relationship with either Meissner or Cantacuzino by alternating effusive sentiments for each leader respectively, while engaging in critical or straightout backstabbing rhetoric for the other leader. Baiulescu is such an example.

Both feminist groupings pushed for women's vote unsuccessfully at the beginning of the decade, when the Romanian Constitution was debated. (image of her article in the Arhiva) Botez was the most prominent spokesperson, giving both well attended lectures (one at the Romanian Atheneum) and writing a number of deeply researched analyses that were praised in Romanian feminist circles. At the first LEW conference held in 1924 in Bucharest, Botez was featured as a prominent speaker alongside other members of Cantacuzino's entourage, such as Ecaterina Cherchez. It is safe to say that Botez became well acquainted with the leaders of the LEW delegations from the other participating countries, and that she continued to correspond with them and to share her research and scholarship. As a researcher at the Romanian Social Institute and member of an International Labor Organization working group, Botez was both well connected and also well respected. Her name continues to be affiliated with the LEW group that Cantacuzino managed in Romania, but Botez seems to have removed herself from much interaction with Cantacuzino and by the end of the decade was on a different path, now clearly affiliated with Meissner's group. In her correspondence with Meissner, Baiulescu makes frequent mention of her consultations and visits with Botez.

Between 1923 and 1929 Romanian feminists managed to convince some Romanian male politicians of the wisdom to extend the vote to women, though only to those who were married, had a high school education, and only in regional and municipal elections. (slide with Maniu and Baiulescu here) The government to extend the vote to women was that of Iuliu Maniu and the National Peasant Party and this is where the role of Maria Baiulescu becomes crucial. As the uncontested leader of Romanian

feminists in Transylvania after World War I, she was courted intensely by both Meissner and Cantacuzino, when their organizations sought to expand into the newly acquired territory. Yet Baiulescu had already thrown her energies behind philanthropic and feminist networks connected to Meissner, and she remained a good friend and ally to Meissner for the entire interwar period. At the same time, Baiulescu commanded great respect among the political leadership of ethnic Romanians in Transylvania. She had cultivated good relations with those men, including Iuliu Maniu, during their times of nationalist activism in Astra, where Baiulescu's name had been respected for decades. After the war, she had access to these leaders and leaned into their well-established relations to pursue support for women's voting rights.

Maniu was not a friend of the idea to begin with, because he saw non-ethnic women in Transylvania, especially Hungarians and Germans, as having a distinct advantage in being active participants in politics, due to their higher level of literacy, formal education, and organizational networks that predated 1914.<sup>46</sup> Yet it seems by 1929 he had changed his tune, and one has to wonder how that happened. Surely Baiulescu was not the only person to urge him to extend the vote to women. But I speculate she was someone he respected and trusted. By then, Baiulescu was also well connected with prominent women's groups in the rest of Romania, going all the way up to Queen Marie through Olga Sturdza, one of the Queen's close friends.<sup>47</sup>

When the National Peasant Party extended the vote to women in the restricted manner described above, Romanian feminists rejoiced and also began to argue over the best way to turn this legislative change into a true empowering change. The challenge was as follows: if only a minute proportion of women could in fact vote, would they be better served by banding together as voters and nominees on the ballot, in a sort of women's faction/party/slate? Or would they have more success in accomplishing their goals by working with the existing parties? The LEW provided two important models of what worked and why: in both Czechoslovakia and Poland women joined existing political organizations and worked inside them to achieve feminist goals. In neither country had a women's or feminist party been part of the success story. Yet only some Romanian feminists drew from that example a model of success. Calypso Botez, together with Ella Negruzzi, Elena Meissner, and Maria Baiulescu, opted for participating in elections as part of existing parties. Botez was thus elected the first female member of the Bucharest municipal council, on the list of the National Peasant Party. Her affiliation with a party that was born and grew in Transylvania and not her native Bucharest may have something to do with her close friendship with Baiulescu and the trust she placed in the role Baiulescu played inside that party.

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<sup>46</sup> Maniu about women's votes.

<sup>47</sup> Andrada Patricia Ursuț. "Principesa Olga M. Sturdza". *Caiete de Antropologie Istorică* 28-29 (2016):100-105.



Cantacuzino did not favor this approach. She was far more interested in seeing how minoritized women used these newly gained rights and how she might counter them. (slide here) Already in 1924, she had interacted with Hungarian and German/Austrian women's groups in a dialogue about their minoritized status in Romania, and had come away with a reinforced lack of trust towards these groups, which she saw as ungrateful towards the state and unlikely allies.

A corporatist at heart, she also could not bring herself to imagine that not all Romanian women would make the choice to follow her, given her credentials and track record on behalf of women's issues. From Cantacuzino's vantage point, the problem was that, at the local level, in areas where ethnic Romanians were less well educated than minoritized groups, there were overall fewer ethnic Romanian women who could vote, by comparison with especially Hungarian women. This was a problem from the point of view of Cantacuzino, who saw in Hungarian women an insidious threat and not a potential ally. She believed that Hungarian women would only vote for a Hungarian party, which meant that they would more effectively be represented among one party in terms of their interests. She recommended that Romanian women adopt a similar attitude and not opt for various existing Romanian political parties, thereby dissipating any political impact they might have had, if they remained united. Though politicians from Transylvania, like Maniu, had espoused similar fears at the beginning of the 1920s, that seemed to be less so in 1929.

The fact that Baiulescu, the leading Romanian feminist from Transylvania, sided with Meissner and Botez in advocating for alliances with existing parties, made a huge difference in the confidence these other feminists had for their position. Cantacuzino was not without some strategic cunning in her position. But her perspective smacked too much of wanting to preserve her own position as leader of a united feminist alliance to bring too many others to her side. Since Baiulescu didn't seem persuaded by Cantacuzino's fear on behalf of Transylvanian ethnic Romanian women, that fear-based argument did not carry much water with Meissner either. And Botez had been able to formulate her own perspective by interacting directly with LEW feminists who had been successful in pursuing their agendas through alliances with existing parties. And thus, like in the previous years, the conflict became one between individual leaders and translated into a fragmentation of political activity among Romanian feminists to the benefit of none.

During this period of fragmentation, Cantacuzino remained preoccupied to a great extent with the challenges posed by ethnic minorities to Romania's international position, and in particular, by Hungarian feminists from Transylvania and Jewish feminists from Bessarabia. She used LEW congresses as a forum where she could sing the praises of Romania's policies towards its minorities and at the same time attempt

to disprove the criticisms leveled against Romania in international for a by members of minoritized groups. (Image) She wrote to the Ministry of National Propaganda to complain about these activities and enlisted herself as a trustworthy representative of Romania and someone with an inside track in the machinations of Romania's enemies inside women's international networks. Meissner and Baiulescu were preoccupied with Hungarian revisionism as well. (slide here) In the 1930s Meissner participated in large public gatherings that spoke directly about this issue and aligned herself and her feminist organization with the same ethno-nationalist propaganda that Cantacuzino supported through her own activities. And yet they remained at odds in their correspondence and organizational activities. It seems that trust between the two networks was beyond repair and even a perceived common enemy could not bring them together. Just as important seems to be the sense of vulnerability both women felt in the development of radicalized politics in their country and Europe at large.

In 1935, several Romanian feminists participated in the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship conference in Istanbul, where they had the opportunity to perform sisterhood with their old friends from the LEW as well as observers from Western Europe, such as Cecile Brunschewig. Among the Romanian participants were Calypso Botez and Alexandrina Cantacuzino, while Meissner was unable to participate, as mentioned in private correspondence with her feminist allies. As with other conferences, she later heard about Cantacuzino's self-characterization as the leader of the Romanian feminist movement, making no mention of other groups nor acknowledging the important role of other feminist leaders, something that did not go un-noticed by Botez. Facile sisterhood belied deep fissures inside the Romanian feminist movement.

Within three years, the map of Europe was being challenged by Nazi Germany. (image here of the poster) After the Anschluss and with the fear of imminent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, Franciscka Plaminkova wrote desperately to her feminist networks, asking for public support and moral assistance in the form of protests and motions, as well as participation in an international congress to take place in Marseilles. She reached out to Cantacuzino as well as Baiulescu. It is notable that Plaminkova saw Baiulescu as a potential ally, even though Baiulescu was not part of LEW or had not been part of any official delegation that Cantacuzino led. More likely, Plaminkova had become acquainted with the various factions of Romanian feminism and saw in Baiulescu someone who, based on her own history as part of a minoritized ethnic group, understood the gravity of the crisis faced by Czechoslovakia. (slide with correspondence)

In her correspondence with Meissner, Baiulescu explained her position against participating and making any public statement in support of Plaminkova and Czechoslovak women. Perversely, her argument was based on the fact that in January

1938 ethnic Romanian women had gained full voting rights, and under the new regime (Carol II's royal dictatorship), feminist organizations needed the blessing of the King to make any such public statements, which she could not view in the interest of Romanian women or the Romanian state. In short, full equality and voting rights for Romanian women endowed them with obligations to follow the official line of the anti-semitic state, but did not provide any rights to stand on their own two feet and speak as defenders of peace against Nazi expansionism in Europe.

Just as perversely, Baiulescu used the institutional set up of the Union of Romanian Women, the organization she and Meissner were leading, as a federation, to state that, based on the organizational statutes of the Union, a congress would have to be called and then a vote taken by the members of all regional affiliates, in order for the Union to make any public statement, much less agree to participate in the Marseilles Congress with an official delegation. Abiding by rules and strict institutionalism became the obstacle against the expression of sentiments of sisterhood and allyship.

Instead, Baiulescu suggested that Cantacuzino's organization would be better suited for a public response, because their statutes did not have the same limitations as those of Baiulescu's (and Meissner's) group. Such words of praise about Cantacuzino had not been used in the correspondence between Baiulescu and Meissner until then. Cantacuzino herself doesn't seem to have responded to Plaminkova with any public acknowledgement of the dire situation in which Czechoslovak women found themselves. Thus, in the hour of need, Romanian feminists proved to be fair weather friends to their Czechoslovak sisters and stood by in cowardly silence as Germany dismembered their country. And their own "empowerment" remained an illusory position of cowering to dictatorship until 1944, when a different chapter in Romanian feminism begins.

**The Little Entente of Women and National Politics in Interwar Romania: The Struggle for  
Feminist Goals.**

Maria Bucur

# Alexandrina Cantacuzino





*On board S.S. "Moldavia."*

19

# Memorabilia from 1931 Balkan Conference in Istanbul

45-  
MENU  
DU BANQUET OFFERT  
PAR LA  
MUNICIPALITÉ DE ISTANBUL  
EN L'HONNEUR DES DÉLÉGUÉS DE LA  
DEUXIÈME  
CONFÉRENCE BALKANIQUE



İKİNCİ  
BALKAN KONFERANSI  
MURAHASPLARI ŞEREFİNE  
İSTANBUL BELEDİYESİ  
TARAFINDAN VERİLEN  
ZİYAFET LİSTESİ





Elena Meissner





Institutul Ursulae de Doamne „Munkacs” Jajl.

Association for the Civil and Political  
Emancipation of Women in Romania (ACPEWR)

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- Elena Meissner
- Calypso Botez
- Ella Negruzzi





Ella  
Negruzzi  
and Calypso  
Botez



Maria  
Baiulescu

# Baiulescu's philanthropic activities

- Red Cross (decorated with Queen Marie Medal for contributions)
- Society for the Protection of War Orphans
- Astra



CONSILIUL NAȚIONAL AL FEMEILOR ROMÂNE

COMISIUNEA LEGISLATIVĂ

# DREPTURILE FEMEII

IN

## VIITORUL COD CIVIL

Studii, comisiuni și propuneri. Raport

DE

**CALYPSO CORNELIU BOTEZ**

Președinte Comisiunii Naționale al Femeilor Române

II

# REFORMA ADMINISTRATIVĂ

Anteproiect, expuneri de motive, raport

de

**ALEXANDRINA GR. CANTACUZINO**

Președinta secției administrative a Comisiunii  
Naționale al Femeilor Române

Calypso Botez



Iuliu Maniu

# Letter from Baiulescu to Meissner regarding Plaminkova

Broșou 3 Mai 1938  
- 141 -

Scumpa mea amică

Doresc să răspund la scrisoarea d-tale din 27 April, luând cu plăcere părerea d-tale despre răspunsul meu către Zna Plaminkova. Am așteptat mereu și părerea znei Calypso, care are aceeași părere, că noi n-avem nici un rost a intra într-o asemenea chestiune, când nu avem posibilitatea a ne întâlni la o sedință fără a face o cerere la Comanduirea Garnizoanei, dar încă într-un Congres internațional în aer, în stare de asediu.

Eu răspunsesem foarte diplomatic Znei Plaminkova din care răspuns va fi înțeles imposibilitatea a accepta propunerea.

Nici ne vom putea înțelege în chestiunile aceste care s-ar referi în privința societăților noastre, când ne vom întâlni. Astfel doresc să-ți comunic că eu nu voi putea fi la București decât prin 20 Mai, - sânt unele chestiuni care mă țin!



CONFERENCE INTERNATIONALE

Ethiopie  
Espagne  
Chine  
Autriche...



PROGRAMME

“La moralité dans les relations internationales”

LA SITUATION INTERNATIONALE ..... Rapporteur général : GENEVIÈVE TABOUIS

SOLIDARITE ET COOPERATION ENTRE LES NATIONS :

Au point de vue politique..... Rapporteur général : G. DUCHENE  
Au point de vue économique..... Rapporteur général : I. BLUME

DEFENSE ET RENFORCEMENT DES INSTITUTIONS ETABLIES POUR LA SAUVEGARDE DE LA PAIX :

Société des Nations, Cour de Justice internationale, etc... Rapporteur général : MARGUERITE LOUIS, D<sup>r</sup>

TOUT LE POUVOIR DES FEMMES AU SERVICE DE LA PAIX ET DE LA DEMOCRATIE

..... Rapporteur général : M.-I. CORBETT-ASHBY

Leurs droits et leurs devoirs :

- a) Dans la vie publique;
- b) Comme mères et éducatrices;
- c) Comme productrices;
- d) Comme consommatrices.

LES FORCES RELIGIEUSES ET SPIRITUELLES AU SERVICE DE LA PAIX ET DE LA DEMOCRATIE

..... Rapporteurs généraux : G. MALATERRE-SELLE et MARCELLE BARD, Pasteur

LA DEMOCRATIE BASE DES RELATIONS INDIVIDUELLES, NATIONALES ET INTERNATIONALES

..... Rapporteur général : F. PLAMINKOVA

Principes sur lesquels l'accord doit être préalablement réalisé pour participer au Congrès :

1. Indépendance des Etats;
2. Solidarité et coopération des Nations;
3. Respect des Lois internationales et des Traités;
4. Recherche de solutions pacifiques;
5. Respect des principes...

Plaminkova's call to action on behalf of Czechoslovakia