In Celebration of 125 Years of United States and Romanian Diplomatic Relations

[The following are excerpts from a pamphlet published by the American Cultural Center, Bucharest, Romania, February 2006.]

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this special pamphlet which commemorates the 125th anniversary of United States and Romanian relations. I hope to follow in the footsteps of the first American diplomat to Romania, Eugene Schuyler, who worked so diligently to develop the important relationship between our two countries. In preparing to undertake this assignment to Romania, I have heard from my predecessors about the extraordinary ties that link our two peoples in the political, military, economic and cultural realms. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to contribute to this special relationship and look forward to several fruitful years ahead. [Nicholas F. Taubman, U.S. Ambassador to Romania, January 20, 2006, Bucharest.]

The celebration of 125 years since the establishment of Romanian and American diplomatic relations corresponds with a high point in the bilateral relationship, shaped by Romania’s North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership, as well as the strategic partnership in political, economic and military ties, as well as on regional level. Romanian and American relations are based on shared values, principles and objectives which underline our countries’ shared membership in the transatlantic family of democratic communities with functioning market economies. This celebration marks both the history of Romanian and American bilateral ties as well Romanian political continuity and consistency in developing Romanian and American relations in recent years, which has generated a consolidated bilateral strategic partnership with great potential for further development. [Sorin Ducaru, Ambassador of Romania to the U.S., January 21, 2006, Washington, D.C.]

Introduction

The United States and Romanian diplomatic relations were formally established in 1880, with the appointment of Eugene Schuyler, a renowned and talented diplomat and historian, as the first American diplomatic representative to Romania. One hundred and twenty-five years after Schuyler first took up residence in Bucharest, the U.S. and Romanian bilateral relationship has matured into a strategic partnership that encompasses a wide range of political, military, economic and cultural ties. Particularly after Romania embraced democracy in the 1990s, U.S. and Romania relations broadened and deepened, leading to U.S. support for Romania’s entry into NATO and setting the stage for its full integration into Europe. Today, Romania is a strong ally of the United States, and the two countries work together to build democracy, fight terrorism and promote regional security and stability. This pamphlet is
dedicated to exploring and celebrating the long and rich history of the U.S. and Romania relationship, and has been prepared with the assistance of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, the Library of the Romanian Academy, and with contributions from Mircea Raceanu, Roda Tinis, Teodor Popescu, David Williams, Florian Lungu, the Romanian Royal Family, Ioan Comsa, Eliot Sorel and Adrian Andries.

The Early Years

Informal contacts between Romania and the United States can be traced back to the earliest days of American history. Captain John Smith, who later emigrated from England to Virginia, is believed to have fought in Transylvania against the Ottomans around 1601-1603, and Benjamin Franklin wrote of a meeting with a Transylvanian priest, Samuel Damien, who visited Philadelphia while traveling around the world. News about Romania occasionally appeared in the United States as early as the 1700s, while Romanian publications also discussed developments in America, first publishing the works of Benjamin Franklin in the 1800s. In 1846, one of the future leaders of the Romanian Revolution of 1848, Simion Barnutiu, translated the American Declaration of Independence. A number of Romanian immigrants to the U.S. fought in the American Civil War, and one, Gheorghe Pomut, attained the rank of Brigadier General. Commercial and consular contacts can be traced back to the 1830s and 1840s, after the Romanian principalities had begun to win increased autonomy from Constantinople. In 1843, the first U.S. commercial ship anchored at Braila Harbor in Romania’s Dobrogea area. In 1858, the United States appointed its first U.S. Consul, Henry Romertze, to the town of Galati to assist with naval travel, and in 1867, Louis J. Czapkay, the first American Consul to Bucharest, was appointed.

The First American Diplomat

Following Romania’s independence in 1878, U.S. Secretary of State W.M. Evarts upgraded America’s representation in Bucharest to that of a Legation by appointing Eugene Schuyler as Diplomatic Agent and Consul General on June 11, 1880. Schuyler wrote Secretary of State Evarts thanking him for the appointment, saying “The history and condition of Rumania have long interested me, and I feel highly honored to be the first on the part of the United States to begin regular diplomatic relations with that country. I shall leave nothing in my power undone to further the good relations between the two countries.” The following year, Schuyler’s rank was upgraded to that of Resident Minister. Shortly after Schuyler’s arrival in August 1880, Romanian General Sergiu Voinescu left for the United States on a mission to convey news of Romania’s
independence to American officials, including President Rutherford B. Hayes, who received him that November. Back in Bucharest, Schuyler, then one of America’s most distinguished diplomats who was known for having translated Turgenev and Tolstoy into English and for his biography of Peter the Great, applied his talents to the task of developing U.S. and Romanian relations. During the next four years, Schuyler negotiated a bilateral commercial treaty, a consular convention as well as another for the protection of trademarks, promoted bilateral trade, wrote countless dispatches on Romanian political and economic issues, traveled extensively, mastered Romanian, and gained the respect and admiration of leading Romanians. Schuyler left Romania in August 1884 after the U.S. Congress failed to appropriate continued funding for diplomatic missions in Greece, Serbia and Romania as part of a cost-saving measure. The mission in Bucharest was thus downgraded to a consular post, which it remained until Congress authorized the reopening of the Legation in 1891. Nevertheless, Schuyler’s successful tenure laid the groundwork for a strong bilateral relationship that was to grow and mature over the coming decades.

Developing Ties

Romanian and American commercial ties grew significantly in the latter part of the nineteenth century and first part of the Twentieth. American exports to Romania, for example, increased twenty-fold between 1891 and 1914. Mean-while, American writers were becoming more widely read in Romania, with the publication of Walt Whitman, Mark Twain and Bret Harte. Romanian culture also began to make inroads in the United States, where George Enescu’s music was first played in New York in 1911. The 1913 New York Armory Show brought great acclaim to Constantin Brancusi, who exhibited five of his sculptures there. Also in 1913, Charles Vopicka, an American businessman of Czech origin, was appointed Minister to Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. He served until 1921, advocating on Romania’s behalf both during and after the Great War. He pushed for the emancipation of subject peoples, including Czechs, Romanians and Yugoslavs, from Hapsburg control. Expelled from Bucharest in 1917 by the German occupation authorities, Vopicka returned to the United States, where he gave more than forty speeches on Romania’s behalf, before joining the Romanian government-in-exile in Iasi. Vopicka’s activism on behalf of U.S. and Romanian relations, along with the awakening of the Romanian and American community in the United States in response to the war, helped strengthen ties between the two countries. Political, economic and cultural ties and exchanges continued to expand after the end of World War I. In January 1923, George Enescu left on the first of his many tours and visits to the United States, where his music was widely embraced. In November 1925, Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu visited Washington, D.C., where he met with President Calvin Coolidge. The following year, Queen Marie traveled across the United States by train in a widely publicized visit and attended the Chicago World’s Fair. The same year, the
“Friends of the United States” association was established in Bucharest with the participation of such prominent Romanians as Titulescu and Enescu. In 1932, the Ford Motor Company opened a sales office in Romania, and in 1934 established an assembly plant in Bucharest. And in 1939, Romania opened a pavilion in the World’s Fair in New York.

**World War II and the Cold War**

Romania’s declaration of war on the United States in December 1941 led to a break in diplomatic relations, which resumed again in 1946 when the U.S. recognized the Romanian government led by Petru Groza. Romania’s absorption into the Soviet camp led to deterioration in the bilateral relationship, as successive Romanian communist leaders imposed a totalitarian system and strict limits on contacts with Americans and other Westerners. However, bilateral relations with Romania began to improve in the early 1960s under Gheorghiu-Dej with the signing of an agreement providing for partial settlement of American property claims. Cultural, scientific, and educational exchanges were initiated, and in 1964 the legations of both nations were promoted to full embassies. Ceausescu’s calculated distancing of Romania from the Soviet foreign policy line, including Bucharest’s diplomatic recognition of Israel and denunciation of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia paved the way for President Nixon’s official visit to Romania in August 1969. Despite political differences, high-level contacts continued between U.S. and Romanian leaders throughout the decade of the 1970s, culminating in the 1973 state visit to Washington by the Ceausescus. In 1972, a consular convention to facilitate protection of citizens and their property in both countries was signed. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) facilities were granted, and Romania became eligible for U.S. Export-Import Bank credits. A trade agreement signed in April 1975 accorded Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to Romania under section 402 of the Trade Reform Act of 1974 (the Jackson-Vanik amendment that links MFN to a country’s performance on emigration). This status was renewed yearly after Congressional review of a presidential determination that Romania was making progress toward freedom of emigration.

In the mid-1980s, criticism of Romania’s deteriorating human rights record, particularly regarding its mistreatment of religious and ethnic minorities, spurred attempts by Congress to withdraw MFN status. In 1988, to preempt Congressional action, Ceausescu renounced MFN treatment, calling Jackson-Vanik and other human rights requirements unacceptable interference in Romanian sovereignty.

While political relations remained strained throughout this period, the U.S. worked to maintain contacts through cultural and educational exchanges. The American Library in Bucharest, established in 1972 by the U.S. Information Service, offered a window to American culture throughout this period, while visits by such preeminent artists as Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Brubeck and Arthur Rubinstein brought American music directly to the Romanian people. At the same time, gifted Romanian athletes such as Nadia Comaneci and Ilie Nastase, and Romania’s decision to take part in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics despite a boycott by other Soviet bloc countries, generated some
positive publicity for Romania in the United States.

**After the Revolution**

After welcoming the revolution of December 1989 with a visit by Secretary of State James Baker in February 1990, the U.S. government expressed concern that opposition parties had faced discriminatory treatment in the May 1990 elections, when the National Salvation Front won a sweeping victory. The slow progress of subsequent political and economic reform increased that concern, and relations with Romania cooled sharply after the June 1990 riots by miners in University Square. Anxious to cultivate better relations with the U.S. and Europe, and disappointed at the poor results from its gradualist economic reform strategy, the Stolojan government undertook some economic reforms and conducted free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections in September 1992. Encouraged by the conduct of local elections in February 1992, Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger paid a visit in May 1992. Congress restored MFN in November 1993 in recognition of Romania’s progress in instituting political and economic reform. In 1996, the U.S. Congress voted to extend MFN status to Romania permanently. As Romania’s policies became unequivocally pro-Western, the United States moved to deepen relations. President Clinton visited Bucharest in 1997 during the Constantinescu presidency. The two countries stepped up cooperation on a wide range of goals, including economic, political and defense reform. Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Romania offered its full support to the U.S. in the Global War on Terror. Romania was invited to join the NATO in November 2002 and formally joined NATO on March 29, 2004 after depositing its instruments of treaty ratification in Washington, D.C. President Bush helped commemorate Romania’s NATO accession when he visited Bucharest in November 2002.
On that occasion, in his memorable “Rainbow” speech to tens of thousands in Revolution Square, he congratulated the Romanian people on their progress towards building democratic institutions and a market economy following the fall of communism.

In March 2005, President Traian Basescu made his first official visit Washington to meet with President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and other senior U.S. officials. Later in the year, both National Security Director Stephen Hadley and Secretary Rice visited Bucharest, meeting with President Basescu and other senior Romanian leaders. During Secretary Rice’s December visit, the two countries signed a ground-breaking agreement providing U.S. forces with access to Romanian military facilities, setting the stage for a new era in U.S. and Romanian defense cooperation.

Economic Relations

Beginning in 1990, official U.S. financial assistance to Romania was provided through the Support for East Europe-an Democracies (SEED) Program, administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other offices. The United States has provided Romania non-refundable development assistance amounting to more than U.S.D $410 million. USAID programs have supported Romanian progress towards improved living standards, democratic consolidation, and economic reform. Bilateral trade also continues to improve. In terms of direct investments, the United States is a top-ranked investor country - in sixth place - with 4,187 companies with U.S. capital registered in Romania. At the end of July 2005, total U.S. direct investment amounted to $771.1 million, which represents 5.35 percent of the total foreign direct investment in Romania. Multi-national corporations with establishments in Romania include but are not limited to Qualcomm, McDonald’s, Citibank, Procter and Gamble, Kraft, Colgate Palmolive, Pioneer, Monsanto, Cargill, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft, IBM, and CISCO. Several bilateral investment agreements have been
signed over the last fifteen years. The American Chamber of Commerce in Romania, affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce based in Washington, D.C., was founded by a group of U.S. investors in 1993. Bilateral agreements in the field of civil aviation, science and technology, customs cooperation, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy were all signed in 1998.

Romania - A Reliable Ally in the Global War on Terrorism

Romania has been a staunch ally in the Global War on Terrorism, providing troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq and promising to keep Romanian soldiers in both those countries as long as necessary. President Basescu has repeatedly underscored the centrality of Romania’s strategic alliance with the United States and senior Romanian political leaders, including the President and Prime Minister, fully support the presence of U.S. military facilities on Romanian soil. Romania has made its airspace, ground infrastructure, and naval facilities available to U.S. and NATO forces engaged in the global war on terrorism and senior government leaders have promised to continue to do so in the future.

Michael Guest, U.S. Ambassador 2001-2004. Romania’s acceptance into NATO was an exciting moment for our Embassy! We were proud that we had helped Romania reach that goal - but thrilled that Romania had earned its place by making tough decisions that showed its commitment to shared Alliance values.

I guess most people will always remember the rainbow that appeared when President Bush came to Bucharest, to celebrate this achievement. But it is the crowd that I will remember: so many people waiting, through many soggy hours of rain, to join in that moment! I was overcome with emotion when I stepped into the dais with Mrs. Bush. That crowd signaled to me that Romanians share our interest in building a broader partnership, based on the fundamental freedoms that are important both to our countries and to the surrounding region.

Cultural and Educational Relations

Strong intellectual ties and appreciation for one another’s culture have helped sustain U.S. and Romanian relations even in the most difficult periods. Today, the United States and Romania cooperate in a number of cultural areas, and are active in promoting educational and other exchanges between the two countries that have benefited hundreds of Romanians and Americans. Established in 1993, the Romanian and U.S. Fulbright Commission administers an educational and cultural exchange program between the two countries and has offered scholarships on a nationwide competitive basis.
It also hosts an Educational Advising Center, which is active throughout Romania and provides the most comprehensive source of information in Romania on U.S. study opportunities at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level. The U.S. Embassy administers the U.S. International Visitors Program.
Program, which introduces leading Romanians to the United States, and brings American speakers to Romania for lectures and conferences. Other programs focus on media freedom, democratization, judicial reform, civic education, English teaching and civil society. In addition, the U.S. Embassy’s Cultural Center organizes performances, exhibits and artistic exchanges that contribute to strong cultural ties between our two countries.

J. D. Crouch II, U.S. Ambassador 2003-2004. Romania is an important partner in the war on terrorism and in the cause of freedom. Its troops serve with distinction alongside those of the United States in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans. Romanian contributions demonstrate an impressive commitment to defending the values which lie at the heart of the transatlantic alliance. Furthermore, Romania’s own transition experience offers useful insights for today’s emerging democracies. During my time in Bucharest, Romania and the United States intensified our work together to ensure that Romania’s neighborhood, the Balkans and Black Sea region, is secure, democratic and increasingly anchored in a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

Its entry into NATO in the spring of 2004 and its expected accession into the European Union in 2007 speak volumes about the progress it has made to date and reflect its hopes for the future. Much remains to be done, however, and serious issues such as judicial reform, transparency in government, and the fight against corruption, must continue to be addressed. Knowing Romania as I do, I am confident that it will be successful and will become an even stronger and more vibrant partner of the United States.

From the American Library to American Corners

From 1972 until the fall of communism, the American Library in Bucharest was a vital intellectual and cultural haven for many Romanians. In its heyday in the 1980s, about 3,000 people came into the Library each week, whether it was for ABC news, documentaries, movies, lectures, exhibits or the Library itself. These resources provided Romanians with a glimpse of another world, not just through the materials provided, but by the warm and welcoming atmosphere and the effort made by America to reach out to Romania. In 1995, the Library became an Information Resource Center, open to the public and offering a reference collection on the United States. The effort by the United States to reach out continues with the establishment of “America Corners,” special American collections in public libraries around Romania. “America Corners” have opened in Iasi and Timisoara, and new corners will open in 2006 in Craiova, Baia Mare, Bacau and Constanta.
Romanians in the United States

A number of prominent Romanian immigrants and visitors have contributed to the development of the United States. An early example is that of George Pomut, a Romanian immigrant, who fought as an officer in the U.S. Civil War under General Ulysses Grant, finally rising to the rank of Brigadier General in 1866. He subsequently entered the U.S. Diplomatic Service and served as U.S. Consul in St. Petersburg, where he participated in negotiations to purchase Alaska from Russia. Other prominent Romanians who have been prominent in American cultural life either as immigrants or visitors include Mircea Eliade, Constantin Brancusi, George Enescu, and Andrei Serban. Today, a thriving Romanian and American community of over 400,000 is active in preserving and promoting Romanian culture in the United States.

Romania on the National Mall

In the summer of 1999, the Smithsonian Institute featured Romania in its “Folklife Festival,” which is held yearly on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Several hundred Romanian artists traveled to Washington to represent Romania, including a team of craftsmen who assembled a life-size wooden replica of a 13th century Maramures church on the Mall. Over one million visitors attended the Festival and were able to taste Romanian food, hear Romanian music, watch Romanian artisans at work and visit the beautiful church.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on U.S. and Romanian Relations

The past fifteen years have witnessed remarkable progress not only in U.S. and Romanian relations, but in Romania’s relations with the rest of the world. Already a key member of NATO, Romania is strengthening its Euro-Atlantic ties as it prepares to join the European Union. Romania has been a
vital force in the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI). Romania’s recent service on the United Nations Security Council has also been exemplary, and we look forward to Romania’s assuming the Council presidency in October. Romania’s outstanding contribution to the war on terrorism deserves special mention, for few countries have exhibited as strong and unwavering a commitment in countering this global threat. Romania has been and remains a stalwart ally in the war on terrorism. We especially appreciate Romania’s role in Iraq and Afghanistan where, as a member of the coalition, Romania is deploying numerous troops and making diplomatic efforts to bring stability to both countries and to facilitate reconstruction efforts, elections, and democratic transformation. Romanian soldiers have also played a key role in the Balkans and provided troops for United Nations missions in Africa and other regions far from Romania. Romania’s international role has not been limited to defense and security matters. As a leading participant in the Community of Democracies, Romania has shown its commitment to sharing with others its experience in moving from dictatorship to democracy. We applaud this commitment, just as we applaud Romania’s humanitarian initiative in accepting over 400 refugees from Uzbekistan. [Excerpt from an August 26, 2005 letter from Secretary of State Rice to the Romanian Ambassadorial Conference.]

Romanian Foreign Minister Ungureanu on U.S. and Romanian Relations:

We are happy to note the extraordinary development of the Romanian and American ties, from their beginning in 1880 until today, when Romania and the U.S. are partners and allies in addressing the challenges of this still young, but troubled century. We have stayed together as friends in hardship and in prosperity. Even during the Cold War years, when Romania was locked up behind the Iron Curtain by a dictatorial regime, the friendship and deeply shared aspirations between our two peoples, hidden as they were at times, did not fade away. After 1989, the bonds between our countries have been strengthened through our cooperation in facing emerging security threats and advancing freedom and democracy in our immediate neighborhood and beyond. Romania’s strategic partnership with the United States has become an essential pillar of my country’s foreign policy. It has also proved an extraordinary tool in assisting Romania to become a stronger nation over the last fifteen years, through concrete support for democratic reform and economic modernization across a broad spectrum of areas and institutions. This is a partnership built on dialogue between our countries’ political, military and business establishments, between our peoples and our elites. It is the expression of a joint commitment to defend common interests and common values. It has also brought a distinctive contribution to redefining the strategic profile of Romania, by turning our political and
military capabilities and resources into an asset for the Euro-Atlantic community. [Excerpt from an August 31, 2005 letter from Foreign Minister Ungureanu to Secretary of State Rice.]