



ORIGINAL PAPER

The problem of establishing air connections between Romania and Great Britain after World War II

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Abstract:

The issue of the development of air connections interrupted by the outbreak of World War II was important for the individual countries concerned. Unfortunately, as in the case of other aspects of politics, the broadly understood aviation policy was also subject to the conditions of the so-called "Great Politics" and also reflected the state of political relations between East and West. London, as the capital of the British Empire, was a desirable and prestigious destination for air transport. Romania did not maintain direct connections in the interwar period, although it was interested in potentially opening connections to the British Mandate in Palestine. After World War II, due to the control of Romanian air transport by the Soviets – it was not possible to open connections – in the absence of appropriate agreements between London and Moscow. Such possibilities appeared only at the time of formal independence of the Romanian aviation market from the tutelage of the USSR. Also important in this respect was the détente in mutual relations, which actually opened up the possibility of tourist exchange between the countries concerned. The example of Romania was interesting because, unlike other countries of the socialist camp, the opening of regular communication was preceded by quite intensive cooperation in the field of charter flights. Performed by British private carriers. Finally, regular cooperation was established in an asymmetrical manner and launched for political, not economic reasons – as a kind of security of Romanians regarding the purchase of British BAC 1-11 aircraft.

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Introduction

Air communication after the Second World War gained more and more importance, both as a means of facilitating the movement of people between individual points on the map, but also as an important element in shaping international relations. Very often, through the analysis of air relations, it is possible to conclude about the state of relations between the countries concerned, broadly understood. The discussed example – the establishment of air relations between Romania and the United Kingdom allows to indicate several important elements characteristic of broadly understood air diplomacy. In addition to the obvious element of facilitating movement, it is worth paying attention to the important category of prestige that in the 60's surrounded national airlines (especially for the Romanians) – which was related to the choice of the airport where the Romanian carrier could land. On the other hand, the British also wanted to use relations with Romania to sell their own aerospace products – of course, this needed an adequate political dimension. This article is based primarily on the analysis of materials gathered in the British National Archives (London), while in order to fully present the discussed issue, it will be necessary to confront those findings with Romanian archives. The time frame covers the period between: the start of talks in 1963 and the Romanians reaching the desired state of affairs, i.e. landing at Heathrow, which happened in the winter flight schedule of 1970.

Background

The tradition of direct air connections between Romania and Great Britain is not too long, especially considering the scope of mutual cooperation in the interwar period, especially regarding the volume of British investments in Romania, which should inevitably generate an appropriate volume of traffic. Due to its distance and geographical location (apart from routes to the British colonies), Romania appears to have remained outside the orbit of interest of the British airlines. Some chances of changing the situation would probably take place in the early 40s. From April 1939, *British Airways Ltd* began flights to Budapest; therefore, it could have been expected that in the near future it would be extended to Bucharest, but the outbreak of war effectively prevented this.

Also, the Romanian airline *LARES* did not expand in the north-western direction, its longest flight in this direction led to Warsaw and Berlin, where from April 17, 1939 it was possible to change to a plane to London.

After the end of World War II, the network of connections provided by Western airlines and, on the basis of reciprocity, their eastern counterparts was not very extensive. First of all, this resulted from the limitation, or rather the freeze of tourist traffic between Eastern Europe and the West, which was a consequence of the pauperization of societies, and institutional restrictions preventing individual foreign travel either to Western European countries in the case of countries from behind the "Iron Curtain" or in the opposite direction (Lobel, 2004: 159). Officially, to travel behind the Iron Curtain, you had to have permission from the State Department. Since the end of the 40s, the countries of the socialist bloc were on the "black list" subject to exit restrictions. Nevertheless, such attempts have happened, especially from the West, where often under the guise of a holiday in Western Europe it was possible to obtain a passport on which the trip to the countries of the Eastern Bloc was made, of course, the consequences fell on the delinquent only after returning to the USA (Hearings ..., 1969:

357). It is worth mentioning that formally a passport was required when leaving the USA only from 1952.

Economic issues – ticket prices – horrendous from today's point of view, were not the only limitation affecting the possibility of travel. With regard to the "ordinary" factors, it is also necessary to mention the difficult process of buying a ticket in international transport, especially for citizens of socialist countries. Here the biggest problem was to obtain an individual passport and later obtain (legal) funds for the purchase of a ticket. By the way, we must remember that formally the possession of foreign currencies and bullion was, at least until around 1956, formally prohibited, so if someone had more money to buy a ticket, he almost immediately became a suspect. When it comes to travel from West to East, important restrictions were: the formal ban on e.g. US citizens traveling to areas outside the Iron Curtain, and also important – the absurd conversion rate of the local currency (leu, zloty, crown) to the US dollar, which resulted in the belief in the high prices level prevailing in Poland or Romania (NYT, January 8, 1956). In the case of the People's Republic of Poland, this rate was defined as \$ 1 = PLN 4 (until 1957). Later we are also dealing with a "special rate" also used in tourist installments, or in currency exchange by foreigners by the ratio of \$ 1 = PLZ 24, which significantly improved the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination). In the case of Romania, it was \$1 = 11.20 lei (1952-1953), then \$1 = 6 lei (1954-1971) [BNR]. Only the introduction of the so-called "special exchange rates", or simply "turning a blind eye" to the exchange of at least part of the currency on the "black market" improved the chances of attracting tourists by individual countries (BNR). However, this required a serious volume of investment, especially in tourist infrastructure, which had to be attractive for the "foreign exchange" tourist. Therefore, in the case of Romania, we observe for a very long time the advantage of organized tourist traffic – ensuring adequate "occupancy" of seaside resorts.

Aviation agreement negotiations

The first attempts to organize connections between Romania and Great Britain can be observed in 1963, but initially they were quite sluggish, what the British side did not fail to use during later negotiations in 1965 – pointing out that this sluggishness actually cost Romanians the opportunity to fly to Heathrow – because in the meantime the policy of allowing new carriers to this airport has changed (BT 245/1304, 4-8 X 1965).

At the beginning of 1964, the British negotiating strategy was to agree to one TAROM flight per week with 84 seats Il-18 with a possible increase in frequency if necessary, while in return priority was expected for British charter airlines for servicing Romanian Black Sea resorts, this was actually a *sine qua non* condition for further agreement (FO 371/176184). These conditions were repeated several times in correspondence with the Romanian side, e.g. on March 2, 1964. (FO371/176184, GA 3137/1).

Particular attention was paid to the issue of the distribution of income generated by summer charter flights, and it was also mentioned that, for example, the charter permit in 1963 was issued with violation of the principle of equal distribution of profits, and under clear pressure from the Foreign Office (FO371/176184, GA 3137/2). It was suggested not to repeat this mistake in the future, especially as it was a good negotiating point for the introduction of scheduled flights. Maintaining the profit distribution ratio 50:50 was motivated by the complementarity of the proposed solution with those used in relations with other carriers. The first proposal for charter flights from the Romanian

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side for the 1964 season assumed that TAROM would make 30 flights with the Il-18 aircraft (which gave an average of 89 people per flight) – which meant a total of 2670 seats, while the British (BUA - British United Airlines) were offered the opportunity to take 15 flights by Bristol *Britannia*, which was to secure 1830 seats (this gave 122 seats per flight). This difference in availability (68%:32%) was not accepted by the UK aviation authorities. It was suggested to reduce the number of flights carried out by TAROM to 20 flight operations, or to offer "oversized" flights together with the BUA – but this certainly did not suit the Romanian side to the end, because it deprived it of possible budget revenues. The question of the exact distribution of seats on charter flights was constant, theoretically fluctuating in the range of 50-60% in favor of one of the airlines. It is worth mentioning that despite the fact that the British carrier sometimes changed (in 1966 it was BUA, in 1967 Caledonian), the offer of places was actually constant - about 3000 per year and unlike, for example, Bulgaria did not change, and even it decreased during the tourist season (BA 245/1304; 36).

The analysis of the aviation market made in 1964, showed that the biggest problem in the further development of British-Romanian cultural, scientific or sports contacts (so very important due to broadly understood public diplomacy) is simply the cost of air travel, which at that time was at the level of almost 100 pounds, this was quite significant (corresponding to about two months average earnings of a worker – 14 pounds weekly) (Parliament). Therefore, there were interpellations calling for a possible reduction in the prices of air connections – which, understandably, could have a positive impact on traffic on routes that operated below the profitability limit (this concerned most of the traffic in the eastern direction) (FO 371/176184, GA 3137/4). This was the matter of regular connections, because, as already mentioned, there was no problem with tourist traffic, organized on the basis of charters, here flights were properly filled. This was due to quite specific British legal regulations regarding the connection between the regular transport market and the charter market. It particularly concerned transport to European destinations. The solution itself was known as *Provision one* - it regulated the minimum price for a week's holiday (package holiday) at the level of a regular, return air ticket according to the IATA tariff (Woodley, 2016: 20). This shows the desire to defend to a certain extent the interests of the main British carrier BEA, and on the other hand, a certain irrationality of IATA tariffs – since it was possible to sell a flight and a week's stay at the same price – so it is not surprising that regular flights to Romania were used only by people on business trips, i.e. rather those who did not have to take into account the costs. The very idea of applying reduced prices for connections was difficult to implement because in the market realities of the time, prices were regulated by the relevant provisions of IATA, therefore the only possibility of obtaining lower prices for flights was to admit a carrier from outside this organization who would not be bound by its provisions. In Romanian case this was in theory very simple because TAROM was not a member of this organisation until 1993, but the problem was that there was also the British counterpart, who was a member of IATA, so both sides were bound by IATA's regulations. Another option was to use the rather controversial mechanism (Affinity Group Charter Flights), which allowed members of certain organizations to buy charter flights – but this solution was used rather on transatlantic lines. Another option was the use of ITX (Inclusive Tour Excursion Fares) fares, which allowed IATA members to sell flights as part of purchased packages at a correspondingly lower price – but this solution was only possible on scheduled flights (25-35% reduction, depending on the size of the group) (Woodley, 2016: 20).

As far as Romania's popularity as a tourist destination is concerned, one should also remember about another mechanism, today more associated with the reality affecting the inhabitants of socialist countries. These were amounts that could be spent on foreign holidays – in the interesting period they were set at £100 for the British (until 1966) and later reduced to 65 pounds as a result of the crisis, of these 50 pounds were issued in travellers' cheques and 15 pounds in cash. Hence the relative popularity of Eastern European countries as cheaper countries, where these amounts allowed for a bit of "madness". This was an additional spur for the countries of the Eastern Bloc to make their own currency exchange rates more realistic, so that they would also be attractive to Western tourists – hence the "Special exchange rate" solutions appeared in the legislation (Naokoło Świata, 1957: 481-482).

Nevertheless, negotiations on the opening of a regular service, initiated in 1965 (4-8 October), were still ongoing (BT 245/1304: 76). From the beginning, the British indicated that according to their actual policy, the destination point for the Romanian carrier would be London-Gatwick. This was a derivative of the policy denying new carriers the possibility of using London Heathrow. However, for a long time Romanians preferred Heathrow in the talks, this led to their *de facto* suspension in 1966. In its arguments, the Romanian side also used prestige issues and assessed that sending TAROM to the second airport in London was a matter of discrimination against the Romanian carrier (BT 245/1304: 8). Finally, the Romanians relented and decided in February 1967 to take advantage of the possibility of using this airport (BT 245/1304: 24). The Romanian position referring to the category of prestige was simply related to the perception of the airline as a kind of ambassador of its own country, therefore sending it to a second-class airport, where it was supposed to cooperate with private (i.e. not national) airlines, was treated as a kind of diplomatic failure and a blow to the prestige of a given country (Gidwitz, 1980: 22). Today, this factor has actually disappeared with the popularization of air travel, but in the 60's it was still important; also within the framework of regional competition, as was pointed out by the Romanian side – that, for example, TABSO – the Bulgarian airline could land at Heathrow whilst Romanians are denied this right.

Romanians were finally given the opportunity to fly to the United Kingdom, initially on the basis of a temporary permit, which had to be renewed from time to time. They were inaugurated on the basis of a provisional agreement (1 February 1967) on 5 April 1967, i.e. with the entry into force of the summer flight schedule (BT 245/1304: 20b). Regular flights took place twice a week, but according to residual data on the number of passengers transported, it should be said that they were not overcrowded. A total of 473 passengers were carried in both directions from April to the end of June 1967 (244 to London; 229 to Bucharest), but there were flights with only one passenger (BT 245/1304: 30). To this must be added a certain number of passengers in transit. The official, ceremonial inauguration of the connection took place on July 5, 1967 (BT 245/1304: 42). It was combined with a special three-day tour for 12 British guests, with the task of signing a connection agreement (minute) and presenting them the resorts of the Black Sea (BT 245/1304: 36).

In a sense, we must also remember that the British usually tried to combine the issue of opening connections with an attempt to sell to the country concerned the products of their own aviation industry, which after all experienced huge competition from American industry.

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BEAs were not interested in starting scheduled air services between London and Bucharest, this was rather unique for the Eastern Bloc. Nevertheless, we must remember that in relation to other countries behind the Iron Curtain, attention was very often paid to other factors that complement the needs of the aviation market. In the case of flights to Bucharest, this decision was economically justified, for example by the volume of passengers carried on TAROM flights which started in 1967. The British were aware of the fact that they would have to subsidize regular flights, thus generating further losses on the eastern section was apparently out of the question. Nevertheless, it was not possible to completely abandon the Bucharest service for prestige reasons – at the same time, talks were underway about selling BAC 1-11 aircraft and perhaps other constructions to Romanians, so any obstruction of the subject could be negatively received by Romanians. In addition, some misunderstandings were also generated by the lack of consent of the British to land TAROM at Heathrow airport - instead, flights from Romania were diverted to Gatwick, due to the lack of slots at London's main airport - It was explainable that the first phase of the airport's construction was completed in 1966 with the opening of the long-haul terminal. (Higham 1995: 22); although the actual, as it seems from the analysis of sources, reason was the desire to raise the status of Gatwick by operating it also with modern machines. On the other hand, Heathrow, despite its status, was much less well connected (the Tube arrived here only in 1977, i.e. 15 years after the first Romanian-British talks). Gatwick, on the other hand, was located next to the railway line, which significantly improved its accessibility (Higham, 1995: 23). The problem that the Romanian side wanted was the status of London for Romanian passengers. While London was supposed to be their destination, the problem would not occur – possible complications arose when treating the capital of Great Britain as a transfer point – here the inconvenience was the need to transfer between two airports, but the British, due to the expected low traffic on the line, were even willing to take on the possible costs of transfer connections. Interestingly, British factors, wanting to get out of the deadlock to some extent, suggested transferring the airline to Bucharest to another carrier – in this case Eagle, which was the line responsible for introducing an "inclusive tour" holiday ('50s) and in this formula was also present on the Romanian market in the summer season. (Endres, 1985: 12) or BUA (Endres, 1985: 12).

Another operator directly interested in granting Romanians landing rights in London was BOAC, whose analyses indicated the legitimacy of launching flights to London, especially in the context of quite large (in their opinion) traffic between Romania and the USA, or even Australasia, which of course gave British airlines a chance to take over this traffic, at least on the non-European section. In this case, the different positions of the two British airlines clearly emerged – while BEA did not see the economic sense of operating connections (in the context of intra-European traffic), the BOAC, already responsible for long-haul flights, saw it completely differently, suggesting that in the absence of interest from state carriers, it should possibly look for people willing to operate the connection among private carriers. The second negotiating option, which was still "on the table", was to allow traffic only through TAROM, a solution already applied in the case of the agreement with France from 1962, where Air France also did not take flights in the first season after the launch of the route.

Finally, the agreement was concluded in 1967. The British were not convinced of the advisability of opening connections between Bucharest and London until the very end, pointing to the dubious interest in the Romanian direction on the part of British passengers, because only such passengers could count on BEA in the economic realities

of the time. For this reason, the Romanians suggested allowing flights to TAROM, with the proviso that the British would be able to start them when they saw fit. Initially, the British negotiating strategy assumed a refusal to reach an agreement in this form (an asymmetric agreement). British negotiators did not fully agree with this position of their ministry, drawing attention to the fact that the Romanian direction is promising because it can potentially be expected to generate profits by taking over Romanian passengers from transatlantic flights who have so far used connections via Brussels or Paris (FO371/176184). In addition, the Romanian side stated that the rejection of such a proposal, which does not actually assume direct risk, will be perceived as politically motivated, not economically, i.e. it would be a manifestation of bad will, which in turn could affect direct trade relations between the countries concerned. The Romanians also stressed that the French had previously agreed to such a Romanian proposal. In such circumstances, a British refusal could mean problems in concluding other trade agreements that the British were interested in (FO371/176184). In addition, it was feared that this could potentially be interpreted as a lack of support for the policy of independence from Moscow, which Bucharest was just embarking on. For this reason, it was suggested that even if there was no desire to sign an official agreement, the Romanian airline should be allowed to fly to London in the form of a temporary agreement. Romanians, for their part, were in favor of maintaining initially 1-2 flights per week, with possible frequency changes after the season (winter/summer) taking into account real demand on the route.

State of relations during the "Gatwick" period

The flights were launched in the 1967 timetable – the relevant temporary but no longer provisional permit was given to the Romanian side on 7 July 1967 (BT 245/1304: 62), it was valid until the end of March 1968, when it had to be renewed. The British acted in this case in accordance with their opinion, directing flights from Bucharest to Gatwick airport, which in turn did not please the Romanians very much, but he had to, at least for some time, approve this solution. The original permit was quite similar to the document regulating the opening of connections with Poland 10 years earlier.

Stopovers were also provided for in this case – this time in Vienna and Brussels, but it was only provided for passengers arriving / departing to Bucharest; on the Vienna-Brussels-London section, *TAROM* did not have the corresponding commercial rights (BT 245/1304: 62). It was proposed to add a stopover in Vienna through the negotiations of the agreement, but this idea was finally abandoned, although the original permit provided for stopovers in Vienna, only the next of them, valid from 1 April 1968, did not provide this possibility (BT 245/1304: 63). The Romanian airline was given the opportunity to fly twice a week, initially "traditionally" for the Romanian side, the aircraft intended to make the connection was Il-18, but relatively quickly it was replaced on this route by specially purchased British BAC 1-11 aircraft, which were to enter service on March 1, 1969.

Finally, for a relatively long period of time, the connection between Bucharest and London was provided only by the Romanians. The British (BEA) decided not to begin scheduled flights until 1969, despite frequent appeals from British business to introduce Bucharest to the BEA network. The increase in interest in Romania at the end of the 60s was undoubtedly due to the new style of conducting politics by Nicolae Ceaușescu, who at least posed as a politician independent of Moscow, e.g. by not breaking political and economic relations with Israel (1967), or refusing to participate in

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the aggression against Czechoslovakia in 1968. In this case, decision-makers managing British air traffic saw opportunities to intensify traffic, both business and tourism, especially as this was accompanied by investments in tourist infrastructure (BT 245/1304: 98).

In the first period of operation of the connection, in fact the only issue of contention was the issue of the destination, which initially, as mentioned, was Gatwick, but already in 1969 the position of the British began to change and they were willing to move TAROM flights to Heathrow (BT 245/1304: 104). The reason of directing the Romanian carrier to the second airport serving the London agglomeration was the general policy of allocating "slots", resulting from the increase in traffic intensity at Heathrow, with handling 6.1 million passengers annually (Bowen 2010; 37). – hence new carriers were usually directed to Gatwick – especially from directions that were rather not strategic for the British (Libyan Airlines, Ariana (Afghanistan), Loftleidir (Iceland), Balkan (Bulgaria) and TAROM. The British side admitted that Romanians during the negotiations of the 1967 agreement were quite strongly opposed to directing their carrier to Gatwick, but initially they did not have strong arguments against this solution. Although it should be mentioned that attempts were made even to resort to discriminatory arguments. However, in 1968 the transfer to Heathrow began to be combined with the purchase of British BACs 1-11 and the statement that they should be serviced at the plants at London main airport (BT 245/1304; 74). This was apparently a misunderstanding by the Romanian side of the position adopted by the British – yes, they potentially agreed to land at Heathrow, but only in the case of the purchase of the HS 121 *Trident* aircraft, which was actually serviced at the main airport of London (BT 245/1304, f. 76). Romanians, however, purchased the BAC product. Besides, it should be mentioned that in addition to Trident and BAC 1-11 Romanians were originally offered VC 10, as well as other members of the Eastern Bloc (Czechoslovakia and Poland). In the case of Romania, this was the aftermath of an attempt to take flights to Cuba, which required two stopovers in Lisbon and Gander. Nevertheless, the Romanian side stated that this aircraft is irrational in view of the TAROM needs. In addition to the British design, the Romanians also considered American (DC-9) and French (Caravelle), (BT 245/1304; 17a, 53, 58). It seems that for some time a similar position on Heathrow, perhaps for commercial reasons?, was also taken by the aircraft manufacturer British Aircraft Corporation. This position was conveyed to the British side by the Romanian ambassador in London (Baiciu) at the turn of June and July 1968 (BT 245/1304; 80). The ambassador, in turn, was supported by his own Ministry of Transport, also pointing to the same premises for a possible transfer to Heathrow. The British manufacturer, in turn, undoubtedly wanted the best impression from the Romanians, because in addition to selling the aircraft themselves to Romanians, they also counted on the sale of licenses for the production of aircraft. Talks on this subject were conducted in parallel with talks about the supply of aircraft, but their finale was much later, in 1978, when a license agreement was signed for the production of these aircraft in Romania. The aforementioned position conditioning the granting of benefits depending on the choice of the right aircraft was quite popular in the realities of the 60s and 70s (Gidwitz 1980; 26).

However, for the purposes of the UK authorities, BAC claimed that there were no specific requirements as to the place of servicing of its aircraft. The arguments of the Romanian side were quickly rejected by the British, who showed that these aircraft could be successfully serviced at Gatwick. That position was communicated to the

Romanians on 6 September 1968 by Mr Lanchin. He pointed out that at least two British airlines, BUA and Laker Airways, already use BAC 1-11 and service them at Gatwick, so it will certainly be possible in the case of the Romanian carrier. In the case of Heathrow, this was the case for Eagle (BT 245/1304; 79/2), but their base at the airport was described as temporary. An additional argument for Gatwick was the statement that this airport in the reality of 1968 was responsible for the majority of air operations performed by British jets (BT 245/1304; 88). Another argument for Gatwick was the expected shift of several airlines from Heathrow to this airport, which in turn was to make it easier for other airlines to build their network of connections using a second airport in London. It was also the result of the strategic suspension of the decision to transform Stansted into a purely civilian airport. In the 50's and 60's Stansted was used as an airport accessible to charter airlines, but regular lines did not use it due to its distance from London (about 50 km.) and the lack of a direct rail connection to the metropolis – completed only in 1991.

London was also not convinced by the argument about not very convenient transfers, especially on transatlantic routes – in this case, it was shown that there is a possibility for TAROM passengers to use the BOAC bus transfer free of charge, or taxis provided by BUA, depending on the airline used for the flight overseas. In this case, the Romanian side argued that TAROM passengers had to use a longer and delayed route through Victoria station (there was a city terminal providing access to Heathrow at the time). The British countered this argument by stating that TAROM does not inform its passengers about the possibility of using a direct coach transfer between Heathrow and Gatwick (BT 245/1304; 78). In addition, in the case of a transfer in London, the British government waived the need for Romanians to have a transfer visa (BT 245/1304; 83). Moreover, it was suggested to maintain the policy of directing new carriers to Gatwick, because there was also a fear of escalation of demands from other carriers present at that airport. In a sense, this was important in the context of the possible opening of flights by the British operator to Romania, because in this case it was possible to apply for equal treatment. So if TAROM had to fly from Gatwick, a possible British operator should also use this airport. It seemed to the British authorities that they would be able to persuade Romanians to accept such a lack of reciprocity with a financial argument. It is worth noting that in the context of indicating an airline potentially interested in flights to Bucharest, any of the carriers supervised by the state (BEA or BOAC) was not mentioned. TAROM remained at Gatwick until the end of October 1970, the flight schedule valid since November 1970 indicates the move of the Romanian carrier to Heathrow Airport

The issue of opening/extending connections was also discussed during the British Minister of State's visit to Bucharest in October 1968, which traditionally touched on the conversion of Gatwick to Heathrow, the issue of flight prices for charter flights – which was also regulated by internal British regulations. The British regulator - the Board of Trade received requests in 1968 for permission to reduce the minimum prices of holiday trips to Romania, which in turn may have served increased interest in holidays on the Black Sea. The problem of transporting tourists to Romania was also related to this – the British side clearly emphasized that the purchase of BAC 1-11 should not be treated as a pretext to fully return these transports to Romanians, but a fairly flexible approach to sharing flights in the proportion of "fifty fifty" was declared (BT 245/1304; 90a), but it was excluded that all transport should be given to Romanians. This was a clear change from the situation at the beginning of the decade, when the

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British firmly insisted on maintaining this proportion. According to the British side, the real minimum price, ensuring at least a small profit of the operator, was 69 pounds (for a 2-week holiday?), the Romanian initiative aimed at reducing it was expected, but it was not finally decided. Attention was also drawn to the fact that in this case it is necessary to communicate with the Romanian tourist agency *Carpați*, which monopolized the sale of trips/stays in Romania on foreign markets.

As it was mentioned in the study dated 5 December 1968, the BEA had already analyzed the possibility of flights to Bucharest in the past, but in view of the specific economic conditions – in fact, the lack of a chance of attracting Romanian passengers – obliged by its own authorities to use the services of their own carrier. In addition, BEA, as a carrier using Heathrow, did not want to generate "jealousy" from the Romanian side, which was not allowed to enter this airport (BT 245/1304; 92a). It was a convenient excuse for the British operator to refuse to take on an unprofitable connection. In addition, even if BEA does not maintain its own connections, there is still little influence on the formation of fares on the line – the agreement expressly prohibits the modification of ticket prices without the consent of the British airline (BT 245/1304; 91a).

In the reality of late 1968, it was rather suggested to convince the BUA or even Dan Air to such flights, which in turn would provide a convenient excuse to keep Gatwick as a destination; Because these airlines were based on this airport. Dan Air itself showed interest in the Romanian market (BT 245/1304; 94) – it was interesting because so far the operator had only flown in the North Sea, but at the end of the 60s it decided to expand widely, which was related to the acquisition of Comet jet aircraft. Romania was theoretically a desirable destination, but undoubtedly in the context of a private operator it was rather attractive in the summer season – otherwise, taking into account the economic realities in the countries behind the Iron Curtain, already known to the English, even from previous disputes with Poland, connections would not be profitable for a private carrier. After all, they also counted on a business passenger – with the volume of business traffic between Bucharest and London estimated at at least 2,000 trips per year. This was to be the result of the *British Industrial Exhibition*, which contributed to the intensification of traffic between the countries concerned.

In turn, BUA was a carrier convenient for the implementation of the connection because its base was also Gatwick and also used BAC 1-11, i.e. by designating this particular line, the Romanians were thrown out of virtually all the arguments they pointed out in order to use the main airport of London. In addition, it was also pointed out that the British private operator also offered transatlantic flights, so it was possible to divert Romanian passengers to the planes of this carrier, thus solving the issue of inconvenient transfers between London airports (BT 245/1304; 92a). The positive attitude of the Romanian side to the appearance of the BUA in Bucharest was also influenced by the fact of the potential lease of BAC 1-11 belonging to TAROM for BUA, awaiting deliveries of its own aircraft. According to the British ambassador in Bucharest, the prospect of obtaining a "hard currency" could significantly affect the flexibility of Romania's position on Heathrow (BT 245/1304; 92a). BUA also had experience in flights to Romania, because it was in a sense the heir of the Eagle airline, which had been operating charter flights since the early 60s.

In addition to these factors, the potential of Romania as a tourist destination was also pointed out; where Bucharest tried to take advantage of the growing interest, e.g. by building new accommodation facilities, of course, in the realities of that time, the main

beneficiary would be airlines offering charter connections, but they also counted on increasing individual tourism. Another factor was supposed to be the facilitation granted to Romanian citizens in the matter of having a passport, but in reality it was assessed as more of a gesture than a practical solution (BT 245/1304; 92a). Of course, this could potentially lead to an increase in tourist traffic, but due to financial conditions, TAROM would rather benefit from it, not British carriers.

The good climate sustained by the issuance of a permit for direct flights also resulted in additional benefits for the British side, which obtained permission to fly over Romania for another "flagship" operator BOAC. This was important because it allowed for a freer shaping of flight routes in the long-haul connections dominant in this line. British factors treated the *BOAC* authorization on an ad hoc basis as an element of revenge for *TAROM*'s permission to fly at Gatwick (BT 245/1304; 90a). Obtaining such a permit was necessary due to Romania's non-participation in the *International Air Services Transit Agreement*, therefore every airline wishing to fly over Romania had to obtain such permission (I freedom of air). *BOAC* wanted to take advantage of the overflight opportunity in order to shorten its Middle Eastern routes.

Finally, the British carrier appeared at the Otopeni airport only in 1971, serving a rather specific route London – Zagreb – Bucharest, which, according to *BEA*, was the most rational from the economic point of view.

Summary:

The issue of opening air connections between Romania and the United Kingdom should be treated as typical in the purely commercial context. The connection was opened only when it turned out that it was possible to count on its profitability, while the factor in this respect distinguishing it from other concluded by the British with the countries of the Eastern Bloc was the initial and quite long (up to five years) asymmetry in its implementation. Such a situation was not observed in the case of establishing/renewing air connections with Poland or Czechoslovakia – where *BEA* and *LOT/CSA* actually simultaneously started flights on the route connecting Warsaw/Prague with London. Another element distinguishing the Romanian case from the Polish or Czech case was the issue of preceding the establishment of regular flights by intensive charter cooperation, which, apart from the experience gained in cooperation with Poland and Czechoslovakia, probably allowed the British to properly prepare for negotiations with Romanians. Another visible factor was politics and its direct application also to economic elements. Here it is necessary to pay attention to two closely related factors constituting an important element of shaping / controlling economic policy. Actually, the only point of contention was the choice of London airport. The British had their reasons for directing *TAROM* to Gatwick. They justified this on purely economic and capacity-related factors at Heathrow, but they did not rule out allowing Romanians there, but on condition that they bought a suitable aircraft (*Trident*, not BAC 1-11). The Romanian side perceived it as a failure, as it was directed to the less prestigious, although paradoxically in the conditions of the 60s and 70s, more comfortable for the passenger Gatwick airport. It is worth noting that in the end these irritations did not lead to the break of cooperation in the field of transport between Romania and Great Britain, which experienced its heyday in the eighth decade of the twentieth century.

The problem of establishing air connections between Romania and Great Britain after World War II

Authors' Contributions:

The authors contributed equally to this work.

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