"Tat for Tit" was the way a witty British journalist described the change that had occurred in Romania. As a matter of fact, Tatarescu did not himself take up the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. He entrusted it to an elderly but still quite lively member of his party, Victor Antonescu. (The reader is warned against confusing this man with either Marshal Antonescu or Mihai Antonescu, to whom we shall presently come. Antonescu is a fairly common surname in Romania; Victor was related to neither of the above.)

However, the king and Tatarescu undertook from that time on to keep a close watch over Romanian foreign policy. And, though I am left with but the scantiest esteem for either of them, I have to acknowledge that initially they displayed no intention to modify the general lines of this policy.

About that time I had an audience with King Carol. He was most emphatic in asserting his firm intention of maintaining intact, and even, if possible, to strengthen our ties with France, with the Balkan Entente, and with the Little Entente. He was all in favor of a more vigorous policy on the part of Britain, and wanted to see her promising assistance to the countries beyond the Rhine, and participating effectively in the organization of
European collective security. He was ready to enter unconditionally into any system of mutual assistance in which Britain shared. In one word, he was ready to continue the policy of Titulescu, without Titulescu, whom he reproached only with having thrust forward his personality too much in Geneva, provoking the ire of Mussolini and of Hitler to the detriment of the entire country. He considered that Titulescu lacked suppleness in his personal relations with Beck and Stoiadinovitch, ending up by estranging them both needlessly.

Having been the closest collaborator of Victor Antonescu, and thus in a position to know the essence of every one of his weekly audiences with the King, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I was able subsequently to ascertain that the royal instructions did indeed correspond to the intentions revealed to myself at the start. Nevertheless, the desire to smooth out our relations with Germany and with Italy, and that of establishing an effective collaboration with Beck and Stoiadinovitch were not long in affording delicate problems, whose solution could not always be sought in a rigid continuation of Titulescu's policy.

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Though he had none of the brilliance and genius of Titulescu, Victor Antonescu was intelligent and able. Like almost all other Romanian political personalities of his generation, he had studied in France, and he felt great affection and even veneration for our great Latin sister-country. He had been a member of several administrations. During the first world war, he had been our Minister to Paris, where he had had the rare good fortune to gain the sympathy and friendship of Clemenceau.

Just prior to his appointment as Foreign Minister, Victor Antonescu had been Minister of Finance. He had miraculously succeeded in re-establishing a balanced budget, which had previously seemed quite an unattainable achievement. Although he had dealt only with financial and economic matters during the preceding years, he was familiar with the broad issues of our foreign policy. It became necessary, however, to initiate him to numerous matters of detail which meant much additional work, since he refused to read the files, and insisted on comprehensive verbal exposés.

The new Foreign Minister would indeed have had little time to pursue patient and exhaustive studies, for he immediately found himself in the thick of a series of international meetings.