

DOI No: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14225/Joh305>

TURKEY'S ROLE IN ROMANIAN'S DIPLOMATIC STRUGGLE (1ST OF FEBRUARY 1943 - 23RD OF AUGUST 1944)

Liliana Boscan ALTIN*
Ömer METİN**

Abstract

The present study aimed to focus on the intense diplomatic activity developed by Romania in efforts to negotiate an armistice with the Allies especially between September 1943 and August 1944. Romania which was joined into the Axis Countries upon executing an agreement with Germany would have felt the Soviet threat on its borders upon defeat of Germany in Stalingrad front. On the other hand, although Turkey had saved its neutral position from the beginning of the war, it had tried to support Romania, its ally in the Balkan Pact, in a political dimension in case the risk of Soviet expansion across the Balkans. As Turkey did not desire Romania to be partitioned, it played an active role in regard to making a fare cease-fire agreement between Romanian Government and the Allies. Starting the spring of 1943, the Romanian diplomacy, including here Ion Antonescu Marshal, the King and the opposition parties, engaging in consistent separate peace negotiations with the United Kingdom using the mediation of Turkey. The paper is based on unpublished documents found in the Romanian diplomatic and national archives.

Key Words : *Turkey, Romania, Second World War, Diplomacy.*

Romanya'nın Diploması Mücadelesinde Türkiye'nin Rolü (1 Şubat 1943 – 23 Ağustos 1944)

* Dr., The Romanian Association for Middle East Studies.

** Yrd. Doç. Dr., Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Tarih Bölümü.

Özet

Bu çalışma Romanya'nın Müttefikler ile özellikle Eylül 1943 – Ağustos 1944 tarihleri arasında ateşkes görüşmeleri için geliştirdiği diplomatik faaliyetlere odaklanmıştır. 1940 yılında Almanya ile antlaşma imzalayarak Mihver'e katılan Romanya, Almanların Stalingrad'da yenilgiye uğramasıyla Sovyet tehlikesini sınırlarında hissedecektir. Türkiye ise savaşın başından itibaren tarafsızlığını korumasına rağmen Sovyetlerin Balkanlara yayılma riski karşısında Balkan Paketi ile müttefik olduğu Romanya'ya diplomatik destek vermeye çalışmıştır. Romanya'nın parçalanmasını istemeyen Türkiye, Romen hükümetinin Müttefikler ile adil bir ateşkes yapması için etkin rol oynamıştır. 1943 baharında Türkiye'nin arabuluculuğunda Mareşal Antonescu, Kral ve muhalefet partilerinden oluşan Romanya diplomasisi, uyumlu bir şekilde İngiltere ile barış görüşmeleri gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu makale, Romanya Diplomatik ve Ulusal arşivlerinin yayınlanmamış belgeleri temel alınarak hazırlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türkiye, Romanya, İkinci Dünya Savaşı, Diplomasi.*

After the battle of Stalingrad, in November 1942, the German retreat was a turning point, which blocked the German advancement in Europe. From that moment, in order to weaken the German army, the Allies had the idea of launching an invasion of the Balkan and, therefore, of creating a second front, by crossing Turkey. This once again increased pressure on the İnönü administration.

Throughout the war, the Allies had organized conferences¹ in Casablanca (12-24 January 1942), Washington (12-26 May 1943), Quebec (2-14 August 1943), Moscow (19-30 October 1943), Cairo (22-26 November 1943; 1-6 December 1943), Tehran (from 28 November to 1 December 1943), Yalta (4-11 February 1945) and Potsdam (July-August 1945) in order to discuss their war strategies. During the Quebec conference and the first Cairo conference, Churchill claimed that a second front should be created in the Balkans by Turkey's participation to the war. Nevertheless, on each occasion, the view of a second front opened through Normandy seemed to prevail among the other allies.

¹ Casablanca (between 12th and 24th of January 1942), Washington (between 12th and 26th of May 1943), Quebec (between 2nd and 14th of August 1943), Moscow (between 19th and 30th of October 1943), Cairo (between 22 and 26th of November and 1st and 6th of December 1943), Teheran (between 28th November and first of December 1944), Yalta (between 4th and 11th of February 1945) and Potsdam (between July and August 1945).

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

At the preliminary debates that took place at the Cairo conference, the Turkish side rejected the demand for British bases on its territory, arguing that this would inevitably lead to a war with Germany. The diplomats argued that Turkey did not have the adequate resources for a major war and reiterated demands for weapons supply. As a delay strategy, they gave Churchill a long list of military weapons, which could have taken several years to supply.

At a certain point, Churchill lost his patience and warned N. Menemencioglu that „ unless Turkey did use that opportunity, it would lose the opportunity of sitting at the future victors' table and later on it would stay in the corridors as a member of the audience,..”²

President İnönü convinced Roosevelt and Churchill that Turkey would not be ready on time for a major operation intended to take place soon. Consensus was reached that the necessary aid would not be received on time. The URSS's stronger position after the Battle of Stalingrad contributed to this outcome. The Soviets reached a position that enabled them to eliminate the Nazi forces on their territory and the last thing Stalin wanted to see was American and British soldiers in the Balkans.³

After German army defeat at Stalingrad, Marshal Ion Antonescu realised that Hitler's strategic objective on the eastern front of defeating the URSS was to be taken away. As a result, he tried to prevent Romanian army collapse, along with the Nazi war machine's, by diplomatic negotiations.

At the time, Ion Antonescu hoped that the best solution was to take an uncompromising stance in the peace talks between the Axis powers and the Western allies or to reach an agreement between them so that the Russian expansion⁴ to the West could be stopped. His hopes that such an agreement might happen were consolidated by the events that took place on the African front, events that could suggest the Allies' landing of the Allies in the Balkans. His closed collaborator, Professor Mihai Antonescu, the Romanian Minister of

² Fahir Armaoglu, “İkinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türkiye”, *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. XIII/no 2 (1958), p. 171.

³ Mustafa Aydın, “İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Türkiye, (1939-1945)”, in B. Oran (ed), *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtulus Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, (1919-1980)*, İstanbul, 2001, p. 452.

⁴ Aurel Simion, *The Political and Diplomatic Preliminaries of the Romanian Insurgence from August 1944*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 263.

Foreign Affairs, was the person who had the mission to put into practice his political decisions.

Between 1941 and 1942 Mihai Antonescu had closed relations with Italy's ambassador Renato Bova Scoppa. His goals were, on the one hand, to destroy the alliance between Rome and Budapest that was a big concern for Romania and, on the other hand, to create a „Latin Axis,, from Italy, France, Spain, Romania and Portugal, capable of fighting the Reich. Antonescu presented this point of view during his conversation with Renato Bova Scoppa on the 6th of July 1941.⁵ On the 20th of May 1942, the Italian ambassador in Romania informed count Ciano that M. Antonescu asserted his wish to reach a settlement with Italy so that they could fight together the Reich. Nevertheless, at the late of 1942 and the beginning of 1943, M. Antonescu tried to contact G. Ciano, through Bova Scoppa, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to determine the Italian government to start the diplomatic negotiations with the Western powers in the name of all the European allies of Germany.⁶

The direction towards which Mihai Antonescu suggested a Romanian-Italian joint action was “the scanning of the western powers for signing a separate peace treaty and the creation of a plan regarding the organisation of Europe.”⁷ In his journal, Ciano wrote that Mussolini, who had expressed his wish to read B.Scoppa's report, considered that “the way M. Antonescu expressed himself was tendentious and strongly confirmed his decision to stay Germany's ally.”⁸

Mihai Antonescu also looked toward the neutral states, trying to make direct contact with the western representatives. The Romanian Minister in Bern, N. E. Lahovary, was instructed to contact the Vatican's ambassador Bernardini, while he was negotiating with the ambassador in Romania, A. Cassulo. Meanwhile, the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister in Lisbon, V. Cădere, enquired the Portuguese Prime Minister, Salazar, the British ambassador, and the minister in Madrid, while N.G. Dimitrescu renewed his contact with the Argentinean ambassador, Pereira, asking them to intermediate. He also addressed to the American ambassador, Carlton Hayes, “Romania's wish to

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 268.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

make peace with the United Nations as soon as possible”⁹. There was also a close connection between Mihai Antonescu and Turkey's ambassador, Suphi Tanriöver, as the Romanian government that the Turkish government would assume the role of mediator.

The trials of the government were destined to fail from the beginning because at the Casablanca conference between 14th and 24th of January 1943 the American President and the British Prime Minister decided not to negotiate with the Axis and to impose “an unconditioned surrender”.¹⁰

Being informed about the Romanian diplomatic attempts, the Department of State consulted the Foreign Office, which had a cautious attitude. The answer to the questions formulated in Washington, given by London, was: “The government of Her Majesty did not receive a veritable call for peace proposals from the Romanian government. If something of this sort had been received, the government of Her Majesty would respond that Russia should be contacted first, since it is the one that bears the whole weight of the Romanian alliance with Germany and Italy. The government of Her Majesty considers that the Russian government is in a better position to encourage the Romanians to abandon the Axis.”¹¹

On the other hand, at the end of year 1942 and the beginning of 1943 there were further contacts that the Romanian democratic opposition had with the Allies. On 20th of November 1942, through the Swiss Legation in Bucharest, Iuliu Maniu¹² sent a *memoir* to London concerning the Romanian situation, claiming that the democratic opposition in Romania acted on the following grounds: “the main national objective that the Romanians have is the liberation of northern Transylvania; the national and democratic objectives of the country could only be realised with the help of England; the Romanian troops from the eastern front should be drawn off; Romania should keep intact its political sovereignty and economic independence.”¹³ On 22nd of December 1942, the president of the National Peasant's Party sends a similar *memoir* to London.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 269.

¹⁰ W. Churchill, *Al doilea razboi mondial*, vol. I-II, Ed. Saeculum I.O., Bucuresti, 1998, vol.2, p.185.

¹¹ A. Simion, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

¹² President of the National Peasants Party.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 273.

On the 4th of January 1943, Iuliu Maniu sent a message to Edvard Beneš¹⁴ via Ankara, in which he related that several Romanian politicians planned to travel to the western countries so that they might collaborate with Beneš, but they were baffled by his declaration that Czechoslovakia was at war with Romania.¹⁵ The English headquarters located in Cairo, mentioned in a note sent to the British offices in Istanbul announced Maniu that “the situation in Romania could be considered only if it turns against Germany”¹⁶ In February 1943, when Suphi Tanrıöver travelled to Ankara, after the Adana conference, Maniu sent a new message to the British government in which he reminded them the circumstances that compelled Romania to join the Axis.¹⁷

In March 1943, the British Secret Services in Istanbul communicated the American and the British stand concerning Romania. The message that Maniu received essentially stated that: “the English and the American governments were primarily determined to encourage a liberation movement in Romania, they are inclined to understand the special situation of Romania, but they cannot take any special responsibility before discussing the situation with the Russian government.”¹⁸ Turkey continued to remain neutral. When Iraq joined the Allies, Ş. Saraçoğlu declared in *The Times* that “this does not influence the Turkish policy, but in case of aggression, the Turkish nation is determined to use force to defend the national honour and integrity.”¹⁹

Ş. Saraçoğlu declared the same a month later, on the celebration of 11 years since the inauguration of the House of the People: “Our policy in this war is to live without malice against anyone, to ensure the security of our territory, to defend our rights and interests, and for this no sacrifice is pointless.”²⁰ Moreover, in his speech addressed to the Great National Assembly (TBMM) on 17th of March 1943, Saraçoğlu declared that the foreign policy “that relies on the president’s judgement and on the strong army will continue to defend the Turkish territory, the Turkish rights and the interests, this policy being the policy of the whole nation,” the good relations between the British and the

¹⁴President of Czechoslovakia in exile.

¹⁵A. Simion, *op.cit.*, p. 274.

¹⁶*Ibidem.*

¹⁷*Ibidem.*

¹⁸*Ibidem.*, page 277.

¹⁹Arh. MAE (The Romanian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives), 71/*Turkey*, vol. 10, p. 40.

²⁰*Ibidem.*, p. 277.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

Turks “do not depend on mutual interests, but represent a fundamental necessity resulted from the vital needs of both countries” and from “them admiration towards the US and the republican democracy.”²¹ To this, Consul P. Negulescu responded that “Turkey carefully eliminates any sentimental aspect from its foreign policy; for the Turks, the present state of the war is unclear, they are unclear about the parties involved, about the post-war organisation, their training is weak, but one should not mistake its neutrality for passivity.” The Romanian consul even, made a list of the Turkish dislikes: Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, Germany, US and England.²²

During the three years' war, Turkey conceded to both the Axis and the Allies, it delivered chrome to Germany, the American pilots who force-landed in Anatolia were very welcomed, which allowed the review of the von Papen trial²³; but so in the spring of 1941, before signing a Turkish-German amity treaty, the entire public opinion was afraid of the German expansion in the Balkans, that the advancement of the Bolshevik army and the assembly of American troops in the Near East now concerned the Turks²⁴. The relations with Russia were good, but the public opinion was alarmed by the Polish dispute; the *Ulus* newspaper observed that “the Russian attitude changes when the grow up the power”²⁵. As for the relations with Germany, Turkey “will deliver the chrome three days earlier, which displeased England.”²⁶

On 8th of March 1943 a new Parliament was elected whose members are almost the same, and the president Ismet Inonu is re-elected. On this occasion, ambassador Telemaque²⁷ noted that “for us, the Romanians, the re-election of the president and the continuation of the Saraçoğlu administration is important because they are all friends of Romania.”²⁸ The Foreign Affairs Minister, Menemencioğlu declared that “the interest concerning Romania has been

²¹ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol. 10, p. 40.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 142.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 198.

²⁷ Romanian ambassador in Turkey (1941-1943), *cf.*, Alexandru Telemaque , *Efemeride diplomatice*, Cavalloti, 2007.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 194.

greater since the Balkan Treaty”²⁹; the vice chief of staff declared to the Romanian ambassador in Ankara that “Romania and Turkey are sisters whose interests converge.”³⁰ The attempts made by the Romanian government to contact the representatives of the western powers from the capitals of the neutral states got to be known by the German secret services who informed Hitler. Therefore, Hitler expressed his wish to meet with Antonescu so that they could clarify the situation. The meetings took place between 12th and 13th of April 1943, in Klessheim.

The *Mihai Antonescu dossier*, read by Hitler, contained serious accusations against the vice-president of the Cabinet Council. Thus, at the beginning of January 1943, the German officials received some information from Ankara that M. Antonescu, after his return to Bucharest from the Führer’s Headquarters, said to the Turkish ambassador that “he and Marshal Antonescu found themselves in an extraordinary situation concerning the attitude towards Germany, both Hitler and Goring expressing their fear towards the Russians. The conversations with the Führer drew to the conclusion that, for the salvation of Europe and Germany, they needed to find a solution involving a compromising peace that would benefit everybody. The Führer would agree with this and has abandoned the thought of conquering Europe. Germans could leave France and the entire Western Europe.”³¹

Ion Antonescu interrupted him by claiming that they were intrigues, but Hitler replied that there were proof. Thus, at the end of February, the German officials were informed that “during a conversation with a neutral diplomat, Mihai Antonescu had made unfriendly suggestions regarding Germany, and at the beginning of March, they were informed, *via* Turkey, that in Romania there was a conflict between the royal policy who wanted to exit the war as soon as possible and Antonescu’s policy that wanted to keep the course, and the fact that Mihai Antonescu was determined to partake the royal policy.”³² In March, the German government received some information from Ankara that said that

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 195.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 332.

³¹ Ion Calafeteanu, *Români la Hitler*, București, 1999, p. 183.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 185.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

“the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry knows that the Romanian officials are making efforts to end the war.”³³

The Marshal refused to dismiss M. Antonescu of his position, despite the pressure coming from Berlin, the only concession being a short vacation that M. Antonescu took for „health reasons,, but at the beginning of May, “he resumed his activity, being well rested and feeling better, and he resumed his projects concerning the negotiations with the Allies through Italian mediation.”³⁴ On the 24th of June, when he visited Italy, Mussolini considered the issue, but “he thought it was necessary to wait two more months.”³⁵

The Turkish press commented on the meeting of Marshal with Hitler. *Yeni Sabah* wrote that “Hitler tried to make up for the faults in his defence strategy in the Balkans during his conversations with Mussolini, King Boris, Ion Antonescu and Horthy”³⁶. The newspapers *Akşam* and *Vatan* published Ion Antonescu's speech, where he stated that Romania would fight until the final victory and commented that “Romania is determined in its alliance with Germany”.³⁷ In this context, *En Son Dakika* mentioned that “since it joined the Axis, Romania was forced to give up territories, moreover, it made economic and military sacrifices; on the western front, there were more than 400 000 dead Romanian soldiers and its campaigns proved that the jokes made on behalf of the Romanian army were unfounded”³⁸; while in Sofia and in Budapest there were tensions, Romania is shaken by its casualties”³⁹, commented the *Yeni Sabah* newspaper. The same paper published Benes' statement that “Antonescu's government stakes everything it has and it will probably be the first to leave the Axis.”⁴⁰

Given the situation in which the Axis found itself between 1942 and 1943, the Romanian government tried, at the beginning of 1943, to improve its relations with Hungary, whose government sought to negotiate with the Western powers. In April 1943, the American Department of Information stated

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 187.

³⁴ A. Simion, *op.cit.*, p. 293.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 295.

³⁶ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol. 63, p. 125.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 168.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 141.

that it “does not believe in the Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian efforts to make peace, but they are tired of war”.⁴¹ The *Cumhuriyet* published the article “The European Allies of Germany” in which it mentioned that “Hungary sends an unofficial emissary to contact the Anglo-Saxons, the Hungarian ministry Wornle, who, visited the American ambassador Steinhardt, in this regard.”⁴²

In an article dated April 20th 1943, the *Son Telegraph* mentioned that “the Romanian-Hungarian conflict continues”⁴³, the fact being proved by that “the Hungarian ministry was not present at the reception organised by the Ankara legation, even though he was invited.”⁴⁴ The *En Son Dakika* commented on the statement made by Ibn Saud, the king of Saudi Arabia, that “in the current war, the Arabs stand by the Jews on the Allies’ front and they cannot come to an understanding, just like Romanians and the Hungarians.”⁴⁵

Given the fact they were on the same side of the war, the two countries made contact to the Western powers by the Turkish territory. The American newspaper *Christian Science Monitor* published the article “The followers of the Axis are trying to get closer to Turkey”: “the Hungarians are all of a sudden fond of their Turkish brothers, the Romanians are offering oil to the Turks, the Bulgarians are offering them wood to remake their houses destroyed by the earthquake, but all these countries have to unconditionally listen to London”.⁴⁶ In July 1943 *The Times* mentioned that Hungary and Romania are waiting for a miracle from Turkey, as the key in the fight against communism.”⁴⁷

The extended reports of the Romanian Legation to Ankara were considering the Hungarian activity in Turkey, its propaganda activity deployed by “conferences, the signing of a Turkish-Hungarian commercial treaty, on the 24th of February, Anadolu Ajansı was receiving more telegrams from Budapest than from Bucharest, movies and exhibitions were organised”⁴⁸. The trials to improve the Romanian-Hungarian relations have failed, even though the secretary of the legation, C. Blaga, mentioned the visit made by T. Victor,

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, page 93.

⁴² *Ibidem*, vol. 10, p. 240.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, vol. 63, p. 130.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 270.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 284.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, vol. 10, p. 172-174.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

working for *Pesti Hirlap* journal, who stated that “Hungary and Romania should reach an agreement, since you confront with the Russian threat and we, with the German threat.”⁴⁹

In the middle of July 1943 “Marshal Antonescu used the opportunity of being rewarded with Mihai Viteazu Order in order to reaffirm, along his speech, in Sibiu, the fact that the Romanians were determined to reclaim the country's territorial integrity”⁵⁰; and, thus, the trials meant to improve the relations with the Hungarians have failed. *The Times* published on the 15th of February 1943 an editorial, *The Concerned Vandals*, which said that “no matter what the truth is about the rumours on Antonescu's wish to visit Turkey, the fact that the Romanian, Bulgarian and the Hungarian government hope to find protection from the Allies is significant.”⁵¹

There was news related to a potential visit of Mihai Antonescu to Turkey. In an article published by the *Haber* newspaper, the Turkish journalist Husseyin Cahit Yalcin, mentioned that „Turkey remains a friend of the Romanian nation in spite of the bad principles adopted by Romania; nevertheless, Mr. Mihai Antonescu should not expect his visit to be understood as an attempt to obtain a separate peace agreement. This is not possible in the context of the relations with the Axis, because the government would be overthrown by an internal coup, given the German influence; it cannot be accepted that the Allies should want an agreement with the recent Romanian politicians, as one of the objectives of the current war is to distance themselves from any fascist mentality.”⁵²

G. Davidescu, the General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a private message to A. Marcu, the Minister of National Propaganda, stated that “as a result of the activity of our ministry in Ankara, the Turkish newspapers from the 19th of February have refuted both the news of Mihai Antonescu leaving Romania for Turkey and the fact that Ion Antonescu would have asked the Turkish government to mediate a separate peace.”⁵³ But the officials of the Swiss legation pointed out that the Turkish ambassador,

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 346.

⁵⁰ A. Simion, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

⁵¹ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol. 63, 56.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 47.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

Tanrıöver, will send "his son, Omer Tanrıöver, to Romania, with the mission of serving the Romanian cause and to contact Carol Davila in the name of Iuliu Maniu and Dinu Bratianu."⁵⁴

Tanrıöver does not mention this in his *Memoirs*, but he does speak about a German attempt to contact the US and to make a separate agreement with them and England through the mediation of the Turkish government: "I was invited by M. Antonescu. As I stepped in his office, without warning, he asked: Do you know who has just been here? The German ambassador, Killinger. Then he confessed that Killinger came with some peace proposals from Germany's part addressed to the US and England. These proposals were going to be disclosed to the respective governments though the mediation of the Turkish government. That was the reason why Mihai Antonescu wanted to meet me."⁵⁵

The Turkish ambassador in Bucharest, in an interview given to the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper refuted the rumours about a potential visit of Mihai Antonescu to Ankara. In the same interview, referring to the relations between Romania and Turkey, he stated that "the two governments are in permanent contact and they are making friendly efforts to resolve the problems that concern both."⁵⁶ In an interview given to the same newspaper, Tanrıöver declared that "on 12th of June there are twelve years since I came Romania, having arrived in Bucharest in 1931."⁵⁷ The declarations made by the Turkish ambassador for the press in Ankara were commented at length by the Romanian newspapers, the newspaper *The Universe* published them in its issue from 17th of June 1943 with the title *The political importance of the Romanian-Turkish friendship*.⁵⁸ In his conversation with M. Antonescu, on 23rd of June 1943, the ambassador Tanrıöver mentioned that his government instructed him to give the Romanian government the following message: "Turkey considers the Romanian problems as its own problems, the two nations have identical interests and Turkey will express from now on its formal distance concerning all the problems that touch the Romanian interests."⁵⁹

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p.181.

⁵⁵ Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Relațiile româno-turce între cele doua războaie*, Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1993, p.133.

⁵⁶ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol.63, p. 50.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 225.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 260.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

There was a strong connection between the strengthening of the relation between Turkey and Romania during the year of 1943 and the political and military situation in the South-East of Europe. To support this claim, a telegram was sent by the Romanian Legation in Lisbon to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the 8th of August 1943; Turkey's tendency to renounce its neutrality in case the Allies conquered Greece and its intention to state its position about the peace conditions in the Balkans were mentioned. At the same time, Turkey was said to wish to have good relations with Romania and Bulgaria "that seems to look for help in order to reach an agreement with the Allies so that the German power in Europe could begin to falter."⁶⁰

As concerning the foreign policy of Turkey, in his 3rd of June's report, the Romanian military attaché in Ankara, mentioned that "Turkey will remain outside the conflict this year as well", adding that "the aim is to clean up the Mediterranean Sea by occupying the main islands: Crete, Rhodes, Sardinia and Corsica, which could become military aircraft bases, from where the oil-bearing region of Romania could be bombed."⁶¹ In the opening of the Party Congress on the 8th of June, the Turkish president mentioned that "the main concern is the security of the country and, in spite of all the pressures, they will try to stay outside the conflict."⁶² Prime Minister Saraçoğlu made a similar speech on the 15th of June, reminding the audience that "during the last four years, Turkey has found itself on the verge of entering the war and this danger is still present, but Turkey has excellent relations with Russia, England and Germany."⁶³

After the two speeches, ambassador Telemaque mentioned that "in the recent waiting period, when the operations in the east front are stagnant and the second front is only theoretical, Turkey tries to have a position for the time when the war is over. The concern of the Turkish government is the creation of a Balkan agreement in that period, because this region is the security zone of Turkey, Romania and Greece being trustful countries. This is the real reason for resuming the relations with the Greek government and we will send a Turkish ambassador to Alexandria, the residence of the King and its government."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 318-319.

⁶¹ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol. 11, p.20.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 66.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 148.

Thus, Turkey stayed out of the conflict, but created a trustful atmosphere towards the Great Powers. The Romanian ambassador mentioned that “Turkey wants that at the end of the conflict its army should remain intact, to have a good economic situation so that it may dominate the Arab countries in the Near East and could aspire to a maximum authority in a virtual Balkan Confederacy”⁶⁵.

In the summer of 1943, Germany lost important battles with the anti-fascist coalition. As a consequence of the Russian victory achieved in July 1943 in the Kursk-Orel battle, the Wehrmacht lost its advantage on the Eastern front, being forced to continually retreat in front of the continuous offensive of the Red Army. Thus the massive retreatment of the summer and autumn of 1943 drew the front closer to the Romanian borders, which made a significant impact on Bucharest. At the same time, Germany lost many battles on the Mediterranean front: after conquering North Africa on the 16th of July, the Allies landed in Sicily, and on the 3rd September, they passed through the Strait of Messina, establishing, after several difficult battles, their domination in the south of the Italian Peninsula.

After the conquest of North Africa and of Sicily, Romania became the new target of the Allied air force. What was predictable happened on the 1st of August 1943⁶⁶: approximately 125 B24 bomb carriers took off from North Africa, and air raided Ploiești. In a discussion with ambassador Telemaque, Menemencioglu asked him “if is a lot of the damages”, and the Romanian minister asked what he will do with the eight airplanes force landed in Turkey, the Turkish foreign affairs replying that he “will seize them until the end of the war.”⁶⁷

As for the landing of the Allied troops in Sicily, P. Negulescu noted that “the new Allied strategy aims at the political disintegration of Europe; the Americans want to have free range of action for their operations in the Far East, thus the Romanian politicians are concerned about the American haste that

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 203.

⁶⁶ Operation *Tidal Wave* was an air attack by bombers of the United State Army Air Forces(USAF) based in Benghazi (Libya), on nine oil refineries around Ploiești(near to Bucharest) on 1 August 1943, it was a strategic bombing mission and part of oil campaign to deny petroleum for Axis.

⁶⁷ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol. 11, p. 272.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

could result in a significant advantage for the Russians.”⁶⁸ Colonel Teodorescu mentioned in his report from the 3rd of August 1943 that “the English are displeased that after so many sacrifices made by the Allies in Turkey, not only they maintain their neutrality, but also they do not furtively help the English in their operations in the Mediterranean Sea; the English government considers that at the heart of this problem there is Marshal Çakmak and they are putting pressure on him to retire.”⁶⁹

In the *Aksam* newspaper, N. Sadak wrote *The Neutrality of Turkey towards the recent Events*: “the events in Italy do not influence the current policy of Turkey; the falling of the fascism determined the annihilation of the imperialist ideal, a country that represents a danger for the Balkans and the east of the Mediterranean Sea.”⁷⁰ The minister of the Turkish communications declared that “no matter what happens in Italy and in the Balkans, Turkey will remain neutral, Germany can undoubtedly focus its efforts against Russia.”⁷¹ The same declarations were made by the president of the Foreign Affairs Committee: “we will remain neutral, we will continue to strengthen our army and we wish to collaborate with a strong Romania having its army intact.”⁷²

Immediately after the events in Italy, on the 25th of July, Mihai Antonescu discussed with the newly appointed head of the Italian Department of Foreign Affairs, Raffaele Guariglia, proposing again that Italy and Romania should act together so that they might exit the war. His message said that “I consider that it is in Italy's interest and our own to unite our forces and get out of the situation we were by virtue of the tragedy of the events. England and the United States have no interest in making matters worse in the Balkans. If we act quickly, we can make the Germans face a *fait accompli*.”⁷³ The newly appointed Italian minister responded on the 30th of July, courteously, but evasively.

The Italian government started independent negotiations with the Allies and on the 3rd of September 1943 signed the cease fire agreement, made public on the 8th of September. The attempts of the Romanian government to distance itself from the Axis and to exit the war together with Italy failed. In order to

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 260.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 263.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

receive the Allies' help, Romanian politicians pursued a long and complex diplomatic way, determined to break the alliance with Hitler and sign an armistice with the United Nations. As early as 1942, Mihai Antonescu, the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister, tried to persuade Mussolini to leave the Axis along with Romania, a move which would have been a heavy hit for Hitler's regime. In this new situation, on the 3rd of September 1943, Italy exited the war, whereas the Antonescu administration resumed its attempts to initiate the negotiations with the western powers, by seeking their protection against the Russian demands. Ambassador Alexandru Cretzianu and Frederic Nanu were given the mission to contact the western powers, being appointed the heads of the Romanian legation in Ankara and Stockholm.⁷⁴

As the capital of a neutral country with which Romania had good relations, and thus hoping for the Turkish government, Ankara was chosen in order to reach an agreement with the Allies; moreover, Ankara was relatively close to Cairo, where the Allies had the General Headquarters in the Middle East. Ambassador Alexandru Cretzianu⁷⁵ was the General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the royal dictatorship and the first years of the Antonescu regime, but, as he did not agree the policy promoted by Ion Antonescu which was against his affinities to the British, he had to resign, being replaced by Gh. Davidescu.

Since ambassador Cretzianu was not very pleased with the mission, Mihai Antonescu gave him, he mentioned that "he does not ask him to serve the current government and that he was ready to exempt him from any obligations towards himself or the Marshal, his only guide should be his own consciousness."⁷⁶ He was also advised by Iuliu Maniu who said that "we urgently need a trustworthy connection with the Allies and probably you will have more significant opportunities to communicate with Romania if you accept an official position."⁷⁷ Alexandru Cretzianu accepted to be appointed in Turkey.

⁷⁴ *The Official Monitor (Monitorul Oficial)*, Part I, no 204, from 1st of September, 1943. Nanu and Cretzianu replaced Victor Brabetzianu and Alexandru Telemaque, cf. A.Simion, *op.cit.*, p. 323.

⁷⁵ Romanian Ambassador in Turkey (1943-1947). Part of archives of Romania Embassy in Ankara was taken by ambassador Alexandru Cretzianu and was left to Hoover Institution Archives and will be open in 2020.

⁷⁶ Alexandru Cretzianu, *Ocazia pierduta (Lost Opportunity)*, Institutul European, 1998, p. 109.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p.110.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

Mihai Antonescu asked Suphi Tanrıöver to tell the Turkish government that A. Crezianu should be considered “the representative of the Romanian nation and not of Ion Antonescu administration.”⁷⁸

Before leaving for Ankara, Crezianu met Marshal Antonescu for instructions. The Marshal warned him that Ankara and Istanbul are, full of German spies, and recommended him to act cautiously; the Marshal stated his own position as follows: “I have never believed that England could be defeated. I had to sacrifice myself and to act according to a policy initiated by King Carol, which I could not change without having the country completely occupied by the Germans. It's because of me that we have our political and economic independence. Even though I cannot confess this, because the Germans would make us send new troops on the front, I can tell you that I completely recondition our army after last year defeats and now we have 21 available divisions, completely equipped, except for tanks.”⁷⁹

Once they arrived, both Crezianu and Nanu discovered an extremely unpleasant fact: both the English and the American governments refused to take any responsibility for the future situation of Romania, claiming again an unconditioned peace.

Between the 18th and the 30th of October 1943 the Russian, British and American ministers of Foreign Affairs met in Moscow. The claims concerning Turkey met some objections. A. Eden stated that “since Italy will be liberated, Turkey's joining the war would be useless, since we can act from our Italian base against the Balkans and against the oil-bearing regions of Romania. Moreover, Turkey's joining the war would mean a substantial material support for its army, which is poorly equipped and skilled”⁸⁰. On the other hand, Stalin said that “Turkey guarded the right flank of the German troops, being against the Allies and if it was given weapons it should be alongside the Allies, starting next year its help won't be needed. The Turkish government should accept the change of its policy if it wants to join The United Nations Coalition.”⁸¹

On the 28th of October 1943, established that Eden and Molotov were established to sign a protocol on Turkey in which it was stated that “1. The two

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, p.111.

⁸⁰ L. Loghin, *Mari conferinte internationale (1939-1945)*, Ed. Politica, Bucuresti, 1989, p. 323.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 324.

ministers consider that Turkey should join the United Nations until the end of the year 1943; 2. The two ministers agreed to invite Turkey, in the name of their governments to discuss its entering the war during the year 1943 and to agree upon the material support.”⁸²

During this conference, there was a debate about the item *Attempts from the governments of enemy states to leave the war*, A.Eden mentioned some attempts made by Romania, Hungary, Finland, Italy and even Germany. He got into details about Romania, mentioning that “the recent action of the Romanian diplomat Cretzianu who addressed the British representative in Ankara, as an assignee of the King and of the opposition party led by I. Maniu was to investigate the possibility and the conditions of Romania exiting the war. The military attaché in Ankara also addressed his British homonymous person, saying that the Romanian General Headquarters would be opened, in certain conditions, to come to an agreement with the Allies.”⁸³

After the end of the Moscow Conference, Cretzianu received a message from the British government in which it was said: “Her Majesty’s government cannot consider any undertaking from the Romanian government or any Romanian politicians as long as they do not simultaneously address the American and Russian governments. Such undertakings should be made as offers made through emissaries authorized with complete power to sign an unconditioned surrender to the three main Allies. We are not interested in any other settlement.”⁸⁴

Advised by M. Antonescu, the prime-secretary of the Romanian legation in Madrid contacted the American ambassador in Spain, C. Hayes. The latter had stated that “the only solution for Romania to avoid the occupancy of its territory by the Russian army is for M. Antonescu to sign a document in which he declares that the Romanian government is ready to negotiate with the Allies by agreeing to unconditionally surrender.”⁸⁵

On the 21st of December 1943 the Romanian government sent its reply to C. Hayes, which said that, in principle, it was willing to accept an unconditioned surrender and that a written document would be sent to the

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 325.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 335.

⁸⁴ A.Simion, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 340.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

American government to that end, if at least one of the following conditions was met: 1. A significant landing of the Allies troops in the Balkans, heading up to Romania; 2. Turkey goes to war joining the Allies. The document was going to be sent to the Turkish government, who needed to send it to the Allies when one of the two conditions was met.⁸⁶

One of the conditions imposed by the Romanians was for Turkey to enter the war, and this issue was raised at the Teheran Conference, on the 30th of November. It was decided that “the Turkish government is invited to come to Cairo between the 3rd and the 5th of December 1943 to meet with Roosevelt and Churchill so that the position of Turkey in the war should be cleared up.”⁸⁷ There was a discussion about the “the defence of the airfields in Cirenaica and the occupation of the Rhodes Island, about the different options concerning the offensive attitude of Bulgaria, in which case Turkey should facilitate the entering of the British submarines in the Black Sea so that they can act against the German and the Romanian troops from Crimea and at the same time, to facilitate the landing of the Russian army in Romania.”⁸⁸

Nevertheless, the Turkish officials did not assume any responsibility towards the British proposals. Thus, the two conditions proposed by the Romanian government appeared to be unrealistic, since at the Teheran Conference it was decided to give up the landing of the Allies in the Balkans and the focusing of the military efforts towards the Western Europe, towards the *Overlord* operation, and also the postponement of Turkey entering the war against Germany. In September 1943, P. Negulescu noted that “the Turkish officials claim that Turkey should take action to weaken Russia, and the Allies' actions in the Balkans are postponed; if Germany leaves the Balkan Peninsula, it would collaborate with any Allies' action aimed at re-establishing the order in the Balkans.”⁸⁹

During his meeting with Tr. Teodorescu on the 24th of August, General Asım Gündüz explained why the Turks do not want the expansion of the war in the Balkans : „if the Allies land in the Balkans, the situation of Romania becomes vulnerable for two reasons: Bulgaria, playing its Russian card, will

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 341.

⁸⁷ L. Loghin, *op. cit.*, p.363.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p.371.

⁸⁹ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol. 12, p. 20.

change its regime and it will join the Allies, the result being that we will have the Bolsheviks near the Straits, if Bulgaria does not join the Allies, the English will put pressure on Turkey to enter the war; if the Allies land in the Balkans, there is also the question of them being near the oil-bearing regions of Romania, which they can bomb.”⁹⁰ Moreover, the landing is possible only in Greece and Albania, and to this end, they need to occupy South of Italy. Another complication would be “the conflict between Russia and England concerning the reshaping of the South-East of Europe, the Russian army being still too strong.”⁹¹ Asım Gündüz claimed that “the Axis did not lose the war yet, the main concern for the Romanian politicians should be the consolidation of their own army that will be necessary when the peace comes; meanwhile, whereas you help the Germans against Russia, we are determined not to do anything that could help Stalin. On the other hand, we try to make stronger connections with the Allies, and you should emphasize the legitimation of the war against the Russians.”⁹²

On the 22nd of December 1943, A. Cretzianu presented the general situation as it was seen by the Turkish officials: “concerning the possible conflict between the Allies and the Russians, Great Britain will concede in the Northern Europe (the Baltic states, some regions in Poland) and it will stay strong in the South; in this case, it is undeniable that Bessarabia is in great danger.”⁹³ The conclusion was that “the Turkish government considers that in the current situation it is in both countries’ interests to maintain a strong relation and a policy of vigilance and prudence, so that the army is strong in case of any events.”⁹⁴

Regarding the post-war organisation, the Turks were fond of the idea of a Balkan Confederation: “a Balkan Agreement aligning all states, including Bulgaria could solve all the Balkan problems”⁹⁵ but *The Mir* newspaper replied that “Turkey should rely on a stronger, larger Bulgaria.”⁹⁶ The problem of the Balkan Union was largely discussed by the Turkish press, H. Yalçın published

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

in *The Tanin* newspaper two favourable articles entitled 'For a Balkan Union' and 'The Balkan views of Turkey.'⁹⁷

The efforts made by the Romanian government to remain in contact with the Western powers had reached a new level. Thus, on the 13th of January, Marshal Antonescu sent a message to the military attaché from Turkey to convey to the American military attaché that the collaboration with the Allies is conditioned by political guarantees. Romania cannot follow Italy's example, since that would mean the occupation of its territory by the Russian army. If the British and the American army came to the Danube, the Romanian army would fight next to the Dniester and it would fight off the Red Army.

The new hope of the Romanian government relied on the agreement reached at the end of December with Maniu-Bratianu group regarding the policy that should be followed so that a catastrophe could be avoided. During the meetings between the government and the opposition, the Marshal asked Iuliu Maniu to try to obtain from the Allies acceptable guarantees for Romania's freedom and security. Antonescu declared that he did not intend to keep his position if this meant an obstacle against Romania's well-being and that he is ready to retire if Maniu is successful.⁹⁸ It was agreed that Prince Barbu Stirbey should be sent to London for secret meetings with the British government, given his excellent relations with Great Britain. On 1st of February 1944, the Romanian minister in Ankara was informed by the British government that there would a meeting between the three main western powers in Cairo⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

⁹⁸ A.Hillgruber, *Hitler, Regele Carol și Mareșalul Antonescu. Relațiile româno-germane (1938-1944)*, Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 218.

⁹⁹ In parallel with the talks in Cairo, the Soviets were negotiating in Stockholm with the representative of the Antonescu cabinet and with the one of the Opposition. Russian ambassador Alexandra Kollontai and diplomat Vladimir Semionov had talks with Romania's minister in Stockholm, Frederic Nanu, and with Legation counselor George I. Duca. Diplomats close to Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the National Peasant Party, who were active at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were directed by the Head of Cypher, Grigore Niculescu-Buzești. He knew about all the diplomatic reports sent to Bucharest, informed Iuliu Maniu and sent the Opposition's instructions to diplomatic representatives siding with the Opposition. The USSR's armistice terms, communicated to Frederic Nanu in Stockholm, and to Stirbey and Vișoianu in Cairo on 12 April 1944, provided for: return to the Romanian-Soviet border having resulted from the June 1940 ultimatum; participation of the Romanian army in the fight against Germany; payment of unspecified war reparations and the obsolete character of the Vienna Award. During the negotiations in Stockholm, the Soviets agreed to the requests by Marshal Ion

In spite of this major change of events, prince Stirbey left Romania for Istanbul on the 1st of March 1944 with a mission from Maniu and Marshal's approval. His destination and the scope of the visit were kept a secret, the justification for the Germans being that he has to buy some cotton (Stirbey owned a factory that processed cotton). Even though the declared scope seemed legitimate, the Germans realized that he has a secret mission. The Germans could have stopped him at "the Turkish-Bulgarian border, in Svilengrad, but they wanted to avoid any complications with the Romanian authorities"¹⁰⁰. Instead, the Gestapo arrested Stirbey's daughter who was joining him, hoping that he will not continue his journey. Stirbey did not let this intimidate him and continued his journey. Once he reached Ankara, the British Secret Services gave him a passport with the name Bond and he left for Cairo. In spite of the efforts made to keep the visit a secret, on the 14th of March 1944 Reuters published the news that "a Romanian emissary, prince Stirbey, has left Istanbul to begin the negotiations in Cairo"¹⁰¹. Even though the Romanian government declared that this was a private visit, the negotiations between the prince and the western representatives began under unfavourable conditions. On the 17th of March, Prince Stirbey started the negotiations with the western representatives: lord Moyen (member of the British government residing in the Middle East), Mac Veagh and Novikov, the American and the Russian ambassadors in Egypt.
102

Prince Stirbey declared that "the opposition and the Antonescu regime agree that it is necessary for Romania to leave the war, each party knows the efforts made by the other to that effect, both parties being interested in Romania leaving the war under the best conditions possible. Even though it has a greater chance to make the right move, the opposition, even though is not willing to collaborate with the current regime, is ready to guarantee that any commitment made by the Allies will be scrupulously respected by Romania. If the regime

Antonescu: a 15-day period to be granted for settling the relations with Germany, at the end of which, if Germany did not agree to withdraw its troops from Romania, the Romanian troops would start military operations; **delimitation of a zone not occupied by the Soviet troops, where the Romanian government would be headquartered**; understanding of the difficult situation of the Romanian economy, when the Soviets determine the war reparations to be paid.

¹⁰⁰ A. Cretzianu, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰² *Ibidem.*

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

hesitates at the last moment, the democratic coalition is ready to intervene and take power, being convinced that the nation and the King are on its side, acting for the maximum benefit of the country. Nevertheless, the opposition asks the three main allies to guarantee that the freedom, the independence and the territorial rights of Romania will be respected.”¹⁰³

The Turkish newspaper *Vatan*, on the 29th of March in the article “Romania under hard times” presented the Romanian situation as follows: “the Russian army has partly occupied Bucovina and Bessarabia. Romania is forced to resist or to surrender. Its resistance cannot be too strong. The surrender would mean the retirement of the Antonescu regime and the creation of a new one; consequently, Romania is faced with a strong resistance, a change of regime and a possible peace agreement with Russia.”¹⁰⁴

La Turquie newspaper mentioned in the article “The Romanian opportunities” from the 29th of March 1944 the conditions offered to Romania and Finland by Russia: “The border established in 1940 (the retreat from Bessarabia and Bucovina); The north arm of the Danube and of Sulina; Romania should defeat the Germans; Russia will take actions during the peace conference that Romania should be given the north of Transylvania; the occupation of several cities by the Russians; Romania should give back the industrial equipment built in the occupied regions; the rendition of those who committed war crimes against the Russians”. T. Adam, the author of the article, drew the conclusion that “if Romania continues this war, it will not benefit from the conditions that were offered at the beginning.”¹⁰⁵

Concerning Turkey's attitude, A. Cretzianu noted in February 1944: “Turkey remains non-belligerent, it protects its relations with Great Britain and the US and avoids any actions that would displease Russia. It remains to be seen if this policy involving postponement and waiting will have the expected result: protecting the Balkans from a Russian intrusion.”¹⁰⁶

On the 7th March 1944, in a discussion with Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, A. Cretzianu, noted that the Turkish minister said that “no matter what will happen in Finland, no matter what happens in the Baltic States and Poland,

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁴ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/*Turkey*, vol. 64, p. 22.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, vol. 12, p. 270.

but the southern region of the front should to keep it at all costs, because if you do not keep there, you can not guarantee anything in terms of Turkey's attitude ... must not be forgotten that the Turkish border is the on the Dniester river.”¹⁰⁷

While in Bucharest arrangements were made for the secret and decisive treaties with the Allies, between the 25th and the 28th of February 1944 several meetings between Hitler and I. Antonescu took place. Hitler investigated the Marshal's position if he were to attack Hungary. After the entering of the German troops in Hungary on 18th of March, Hitler considered that he should meet again with Ion Antonescu. Immediately after he received the invitation, Mihai Antonescu sent a telegram to Cretzianu, according to which “Marshal Antonescu had been invited to the German Headquarters and given the events that took place in Hungary and the decisions that he has to take, it is of utmost importance to know the opinions of the western allies concerning the question of defending the Romanian territory against the Russian expansion and also concerning the military and political support Romania could receive against Russia.”¹⁰⁸

The Allies' reply, received on the 22nd of March arrived after Ion Antonescu had left. In this message, signed by General H. Wilson, the head commander of the Mediterranean army, the head of the Romanian state was asked “not to visit Hitler under any circumstances, if he does, this will be interpreted as a sign that Romania stands by Germany until the end.” He should “surrender immediately to the three western powers and order the ceasing of fire against the Red Army.”¹⁰⁹ The peace conditions for Romania will considerably depend on its participation in the defeat of Germany.

The meetings between Hitler and Antonescu that took place between the 23rd and the 24th of March 1944 had a different outcome than the Romanians had hoped. Hitler, being in a difficult situation, let it slip that he could give away the entire Transylvania if Romania remained faithful to the German cause. The confidential stipulation that for him “the Vienna Agreement does not count anymore”, not being made public, had no propagandistic effect.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 273.

¹⁰⁸ A. Cretzianu, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

¹¹⁰ A.Hillgruber, *op.cit.*, p. 221.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

The Marshal's actions had no effects only because the second message from General Wilson received on the 29th of March 1944 was written in the same terms as the one on the 22nd of March. In this message it was said that the Russian government, which the British government had contacted meanwhile, concerning the question asked by M. Antonescu, claimed as an additional condition that Antonescu should contact the Russian headquarters through a Romanian general made prisoner by the Russians. On this occasion they were going to establish the number of Romanian and Russian manpower that would fight against the German army. Marshal Antonescu did not respond to this second message. Then General Wilson addressed Iuliu Maniu on the 2nd of April 1944 to whom he transmitted the same claims. He asked him to overthrow Antonescu because he refused to distance himself from the Germans. Maniu also hesitated, for the same reasons as Antonescu: all the proposals from the Allies consisted of claims and no guarantees.

At the end of March 1944, the Russian offensive was stopped alongside the Romanian front and a period of relative calm started. A new situation of the diplomatic front was created and the Russians made two consecutive moves. The first took place at a press conference in Moscow, on the 2nd of April 1944 for which the Russian and the foreign journalists were intentionally invited to listen to the Commissary of the Foreign Affairs who was going to make an important political declaration. Molotov started by reaffirming Russia's rights over Bessarabia and the Northern Bucovina, and then stated that "the Russian government states that it does not aim at conquering any part of the Romanian territory or to change the current regime of Romania." He also mentioned that the landing of the Russian troops in Romania is a consequence of military necessities and of the continuation of the resistance of the enemy forces.¹¹¹

Molotov's statement was published by the Turkish newspapers in a different manner than the French newspapers which stated "he does not aim to change the social regime in Romania" *Beyoglu* stated "he does not aim to change the political regime in Romania", *Gece Postası* stated „Romanyadaki siyasi rejim (not to change the political regime)", *Cumhuriyet* stated „Romanya' da mevcut rejim (not to change the existing regime), *Tasviri Efkar* „bugünkü

¹¹¹ A. Cretzianu, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

rejim (the current regime).¹¹² *The Akşam* newspaper explained why Romania is so important for Russia: “Russia needs to have Romania in order to enforce its Balkan policy. In the same way Germany started its expansion in the Balkans from Romania, Russia is forced to start as well from Romania, if it wants to impose itself in the Balkans... This will not be accomplished by annexing Romania, but by installing a government that will enforce Russia’s policy.”¹¹³

The second move the Russians made was that on the morning of the 12th of April, in the name of the Russian government, Novikov gave prince Stirbey a document containing the minimal conditions of the truce with Romania. The Russian proposals were addressed to the Romanian government but also to Maniu. Romania was asked to: “distance itself from Germany and its troops to join the Allies, to accept the annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina by Russia, to pay war fees, to set free all the western prisoners.”¹¹⁴. At the same time, the Russian government declared that the decision made by the Vienna Agreement was unjust.

On the 13th of April, *The Servet-i fünun* newspaper, mentioned that “for the Romanian people, Transylvania is sacred, the promise concerning Transylvania makes them doubt, the proposals made by the Allies are giving them grief... in short, this is how the Transylvania enigma is broken”¹¹⁵. In the *Son Dakika* edition the 16th of April, the author of the article ‘The weapon of war, the weapon of politics’, E. Uşaklıgil, wrote that ‘regarding Transylvania, the Hungarians have lost Moscow’s support, but probably Moscow has preferred the Romanians so that the battle should take place on their territory; if Romania collapses, the gates of the Balkans are opened: Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece are in front of this gate; the first political weapon was the declaration made by Molotov... but Romania fears that it would be caught in the crossfire. The rumour about M. Antonescu’s visit to Moscow was probably launched to remind him that the road to the truce was crossing Moscow, not Cairo.”¹¹⁶

However, these peace messages from Kremlin were accompanied by a serial of significant American air force bombing on Bucharest and Ploieşti. The

¹¹²The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol. 64, p. 41.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

¹¹⁴ A.Cretzianu, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹¹⁵ The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs Archives, 71/Turkey, vol.64, p. 59.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

Turkey's Role In Romanian's Diplomatic Struggle

İleri newspaper wrote that "Romania is not only strategically important, but also its oil reservoirs from Ploiești fuel a big part of the German army"¹¹⁷. *Cumhuriyet* published Princess Cantacuzino's appeal on the end of bombing, whereas *Vatan* asked "can the war be won by aerial bombardment?" and mentioned the regret about the damages produced by the bombings.¹¹⁸

The changes that the Romanian officials hoped for, namely political guarantees, were not made neither in Stockholm nor in Cairo. On 20th of June 1944, Maniu sent a special dispatch bearer to Cairo, in order to present the Allies a plan according to which they intended to overthrow Antonescu and to form a new government so that a truce could be immediately signed; however, the plan got no response¹¹⁹. Whereas Romania was trying to get out of the war as honourable as possible, waiting a response from the Allies, the events from the summer of 1944 seemed to indicate that Turkey was joining the Allies.

As a conclusion, after the battle of Stalingrad, in November 1942, the German retreat was a turning point, which blocked the German advancement in Europe. From that moment, in order to weaken the German army, the Allies had the idea of launching an invasion of the Balkan and, therefore, of creating a second front in Europe, by crossing Turkey. This once again increased pressure on Turkey, but the hope that Romania might exit the war also prevailed. Marshal Antonescu decided to prevent Romanian army collapse, along with the Nazi war machine's, by diplomatic negotiations. At the time, Ion Antonescu hoped that the best solution was to take an uncompromising stance in the peace talks between the Axis powers and the Western allies or to reach an agreement between them so that the Russian expansion¹²⁰ to the West could be stopped.

Romanian Foreign Minister, Mihai Antonescu, in the end of 1942, mentioned that "Germany lost the war. We must now focus our efforts to not lose our war". In this context the first steps made by Romania is to exit from the war. In this regard, held secret talks between Mihai Antonescu and Suphi Tanriover, Turkish ambassador in Bucharest (January 1943). Also

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 195-196.

¹¹⁹ A.Hillgruber, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

¹²⁰ Aurel Simion, *The Political and Diplomatic Preliminaries of the Romanian Insurgence from August 1944*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, p. 263.

Romanian Opposition will use Turkish diplomatic channel to send secret telegram to Allies.

Romania tried to convince Turkey to enter the war alongside the Axis or to facilitate and to negotiate its interests. On the other hand, Turkey, represented by ambassador Tanrıöver tried to remain neutral, to maintain its good relations with the Axis and the Allies, and also to become an intermediary between Romania and the Allies, so that it may honourably finish the war and stop the Russian expansion in the Balkans.

Despite of Turkey's help in the negotiations between Romania and Allies and the imminent Soviet danger, Romanian countless efforts to negotiate an armistice with the Allies especially between September 1943 and August 1944 came to an end. Far away from the bloody battlefields, in the glamour of diplomatic reception room, the diplomats' white gloved hands hesitated to sign an acceptable armistice for both sides, thus condemning Romania to Stalin's expansionist aspirations in the Balkans.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Arhivele Ministerul Afacerilor Extene/ Foreign Ministry Archive – unpublished materials

Fond 71/Turcia, vol. 6-12, 17, 36-37, 42, 43, 43 bis, 60, 59-67, vol 58-65,67

Fond 71/Italia, vol. 2.

2. Arhivele National Istorice Centrale/ The Romanian National Archives

Fond *Ministerul Propagandei Naționale / Presă externă*

3. Books and articles

Armaoğlu, F., “İkinci Dünya Harbi’nde Türkiye”, *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. XIII/no 2 (1958), pp. 139-179.

Aydın, M., “İkinci Dünya Savaşı ve Türkiye, 1939-1945”, in B. Oran (ed), *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtulus Savaşı’ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, (1919-1980)*, İstanbul, 2001.

Bossy, R., *Amintiri din viața diplomatică (1919-1940)*, Humanitas, București, 1993

Berry, B.Y., *Romanian Diaries (1944-1947)*, Iasi, 2000

Beza, G., *Misiune de război în serviciul cauzei aliate. România în vâltoarea celui de-al doilea război mondial*, Albatros, București, 1994

Călinescu, A., *Însemnări politice(1916-1939)*,ed. Al. Gh. Savu, Humanitas, București, 1990

Calafeteanu, Ion, *Români la Hitler*, București, 1999.

Churchill W., *Al doilea razboi mondial*, vol. I-II, Ed. Saeculum I.O., Bucuresti, 1998.

Coposu C., *Armistițiul din 1944 și implicațiile lui*, Gândirea Românească, București, 1990.

Cretzianu Al., *Ocazia pierduta*, Institutul European, 1998.

Ciano, Galeazzo, *Jurnal*, Ploiesti, 1999.

Ekrem, Mehmet Ali, *Relațiile româno-turce între cele doua războaie*, Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1993.

Hillgruber, A., *Hitler, Regele Carol și Mareșalul Antonescu. Relațiile româno-germane (1938-1944)*, Humanitas, Bucuresti, 1994.

Simion A., *Preliminarii politico-diplomatice ale insurecției române din august 1944*, Dacia, Cluj Napoca, 1979.

Telemaque , Alexandru ,*Efemeride diplomatice*, Cavalloti, 2007.

Loghin L., *Mari conferinte internationale (1939-1945)*, Ed. Politica, Bucuresti, 1989.