

From Friends to Foes: Romanian Diplomats in Türkiye during the Early Years of the Communist Regime (1947–1949)

Dostluktan Düşmanlığa: Komünist Rejimin İlk Yıllarında Türkiye'deki Rumen Diplomatlar (1947-1949)

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ABSTRACT

With the establishment of the communist regime in Romania following the Second World War, officials in Bucharest embarked on a comprehensive restructuring of the country's diplomatic corps, both domestically and abroad. As part of this process, diplomats appointed during the Kingdom period were systematically recalled to Romania to ensure alignment with the new policies of the communist government. This shift also affected the Romanian diplomatic staff stationed at the Consulate in Istanbul and the Embassy in Ankara.

This study examines the stance of Romanian diplomats in Türkiye towards the political transformations in Bucharest, their responses to being recalled, and the attitudes of Turkish authorities towards representatives of the new regime. The research is primarily based on unpublished archival documents from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and contemporary articles from the Turkish press.

Keywords: Romania, Türkiye, Aurel Decei, Nicoară Beldiceanu, Grigore Moisil

ÖZ

İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında Romanya'da komünist rejimin iktidara gelmesiyle birlikte Bükreş'teki yeni yetkililer, yurt içi ve yurt dışındaki diplomatik kadronun yeniden yapılandırılması yönünde kapsamlı bir süreç başlatmıştır. Bu anlamda devletin resmî temsilcilerinin uygulamaya konulan yeni politikalara sadık kalmasını sağlamak amacıyla Krallık döneminde atanan diplomatlar ülkeye geri çağırılmıştır. Bu süreçten Romanya'nın İstanbul'daki Konsolosluğu ve Ankara'daki Elçiliğin diplomatik personeli de etkilenmiştir.

Bu makalede Türkiye'deki Romen diplomatların Bükreş'teki siyasi gelişmeler karşısındaki tutumları, ülkeye geri çağırıldıklarında verdikleri tepki, Türk

yetkililerin yeni rejimin diplomatlarına karşı tutumu incelenmiştir. Makalenin ana kaynakları Romanya Dışişleri Bakanlığın Arşivlerinden (Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe) şimdiye kadar kullanılmamış belgeler ve dönemin Türk basınında yayımlanan makalelerden oluşuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romanya, Türkiye, Aurel Decei, Nicoară Beldiceanu, Grigore Moisi

Introduction

At the end of the Second World War, both Turkey and Romania were looking for partnership formulas to relaunch their economy and ensure their security. The situation before the war was favorable for the resumption of close special relations. In the interwar period, apart from the 1920s when the atmosphere in bilateral relations, although not conflictual, was dominated by mistrust, Ankara and Bucharest had similar objectives in foreign policy, collaborating to ensure peace in the region. The divergent points of view that the two countries had at the beginning of the interwar period on aspects such as the Straits question, the establishment of the headquarters of the Patriarchate in Constantinople (Istanbul), the residence of the Romanian Legation in Turkey¹, the belonging of the Ada-Kaleh Island, the alliances developed², the emigration of the Turkish population from Romania to Turkey did not cause major problems. These were overcome following diplomatic efforts. Moreover, starting from the 1930s, the two countries developed very close relations, which resulted in the formation of the Balkan Pact, in 1934, and Romania's support of the Turkish initiative to change the status of the Straits at the Montreux conference in 1936.³

As a consequence of the excellent relations, between the years 1939-1940, the two diplomatic representations were raised to the Embassy rank. Vasile Stoica was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania in Ankara (March 1, 1939-June 1, 1940), and Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkey in Bucharest. Tanrıöver had been appointed minister of Turkey in Bucharest on June 12, 1931, he remained in Bucharest with the title of ambassador during the years 1939-1940, then continued to represent Ankara in Romania with the title of minister until December 4, 1944. Tanrıöver is the longest serving head diplomatic mission that Turkey had in Romania. He enjoyed the appreciation of both

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- 1 Until 1929, Romania did not move its Legation headquarters from Istanbul to Ankara, a symbolic gesture disapproved by the Kemalist officials.
 - 2 Here I am specifically referring to the close relationship that Ankara had with the Soviet Union, a state that did not recognize the Romanian borders.
 - 3 Florin Anghel, "Romania Between Istanbul and Ankara: The Beginning of the Alliance in the First Decade of the Kemalist Republic", in *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 54, 2014, p. 435-450; Constantin Iordan, "La place de la Roumanie dans les relations internationales de la Turquie Républicaine jusqu'en 1925", in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”*, XXXI, 1994, p. 124-125; Metin Omer, "Romanya-Türkiye İlişkilerinde Göç Perspektifi (1923-1936)", in *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 30, 2019, p. 309-332; Emanuel Ploeanu, "Romania-Turkish relations in the interwar period: issues, perceptions and solutions. The case of the Black Sea Straits' regime and Turkish-Tatar emigration", in *Revista Istorică*, XXIII/5-6, 2012, p. 433-447; Adnan Sofuoğlu, Seyfi Yıldırım, "Lozan Barış Görüşmelerinde Romanya", *Türkiye-Romanya İlişkileri: Geçmiş ve Günümüz Uluslararası Sempozyumu / International Symposium on Turkey-Romania Relations: Past and Present*, vol. 1, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara, 2019, p. 443-459.

Romanian public opinion and Romanian officials and was granted the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* of the University of Bucharest.⁴

The outbreak of the Second World War once again tested the relations between Ankara and Bucharest. Romania entered the war first on the side of the Nazi Germany, and from August 23, 1944, after the removal of Marshal Antonescu from the leadership of the country, on the side of the Allies. Turkey, on the other hand, managed to maintain an “active neutrality”.⁵ All this time, Romanian diplomacy tried, without success, to maintain a good level of the diplomatic relations.⁶ Even though there were no close relations between the two countries, the Turkish minister in Bucharest, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, nevertheless warned Romanian officials about the discussions held by the Great Powers regarding the post-war world order. Thus, they learned for example that the world was to be divided into spheres of influence before the Percentage Agreement.⁷

Once hostilities ended, both Bucharest and Ankara wanted to continue the excellent pre-war relations. Thus, on February 9, 1946, the Turkish minister in Bucharest, Şefkati İstinyeli⁸ announced Numan Menemenciöğlü, Ankara’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, that the Romanian Government wanted the diplomatic representations to be raised to the rank of Embassies again, just as it had been in 1940.⁹ As an expression of the desire to return to normality, the Turkish Government accepted the proposition of the Romanian side. Thus, on April 29, 1946, Grigore C. Moisil presented his letter of accreditation as

4 Metin Omer, “Agenda politică a unui intelectual din Turcia kemalistă: Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, turcismul și gâgăuzii”, *Intelectualii politiciii și politica intelectualilor*, coord. Daniel Citirigă, Georgiana Țăranu, Adrian-Alexandru Herța, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2016, p. 345-362; *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Cumhuriyet Arşivi (BCA)*, 030-0-010/131-940-30; <http://bukres.be.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/MissionChiefHistory>, 05 February 2019.

5 Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy during the Second World War: An ‘Active’ Neutrality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

6 Daniela Popescu, *Navigând în ape învolburate. România și Turcia în vreme de pace și de război (1934-1948)*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2023, p. 236-242.

7 The information is given by the historian Şerban Papacostea, a member of an important family involved in the Romanian political and intellectual life. According to him, many of the discussions between Tanrıöver and the Romanian political elite took place in his family’s home. “Şerban Papacostea: Monarhia moare odată cu Regele”, interview conducted by Sabina Fati, in *Revista 22*, 22.11.2017, <https://revista22.ro/interviu/erban-papacostea-monarhia-moare-odat-cu-regele>, 10 October 2023.

8 He had been elevated to the rank of minister of Turkey in Bucharest by the decision of the Government of the Republic of Turkey headed by President İsmet İnönü on December 6, 1944. He had previously been minister counselor at the same Embassy. *Resmi Gazete*, 5884, December 20, 1944, p. 8058.

9 <http://bukres.be.mfa.gov.tr/Mission/MissionChiefHistory>, 05 February 2019. *BCA*, 030-0-010/131-940-30.

the ambassador of Romania to Turkish President İsmet İnönü.¹⁰ Moisil was not a career diplomat. Prior to his appointment to the position in Ankara, he had not worked at all in the Romanian diplomacy. Instead, he was an important Romanian mathematician, considered the founder of Romanian computer sciences. Moreover, the family he belonged to was one with strong connections in the Romanian cultural and political life.¹¹ The appointment of Moisil as ambassador to Ankara was part of the strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania to establish close diplomatic relations with capitals important to Bucharest. Thus, three other important Romanian intellectuals were appointed ambassadors in the same period: Simion Stoilov in Bulgaria, Iorgu Jordan in the Soviet Union, Mihai Ralea in the United States and Tudor Vianu in Yugoslavia.¹² Ankara, for its part, after Şefkati İstiniyeli ended his mission on June 25, 1947, appointed its first ambassador on June 29, 1947, in the person of Foad Hulusi Togay. He obtained his accreditation on July 6, 1947.¹³

However, the political realities and the two countries' membership in different alliance systems could not be overcome by the memory of the close pre-war relations. After August 23, 1944, for three years, Romania was ruled by a series of governments that included both communists and representatives of the historical Romanian parties, supporters of a democratic regime. On December 30, 1947, the last king of Romania, Mihai I, was forced to abdicate, and the People's Republic of Romania was proclaimed. The main driver of these changes were the communist politicians who, aided by Moscow, managed to remove, often by violence, the democratic political forces and finally established a totalitarian regime. It was increasingly obvious that Romania was in Moscow's sphere of influence, especially since, on February 4, 1948, Moscow and Bucharest signed a treaty of friendship, collaboration, and mutual aid.¹⁴ Moreover, until 1958, Soviet troops were present on Romanian territory, which was a cause for concern for Ankara officials. In addition, the Soviet Union claimed the Turkish territories of

10 *Biblioteca Academiei Române (BAR)*, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimat 2 b; *Ulus*, April 30, 1946. Gheorghe Tătărescu, Vice President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, drafted the letter of accreditation on March 14, 1946. See *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı, Dışişleri Bakanlığı Türk Diplomatik Arşivi (TDA)*, 568/39292-158930-27, 14.03.1946.

11 Metin Omer, "Un diplomat de tranziție. Grigore C. Moisil, ambasador la Ankara (1946-1948)", in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca*, LXII, 2023, p. 337-338.

12 Metin Omer, "Un diplomat de tranziție. Grigore C. Moisil, ambasador la Ankara (1946-1948)", p. 338-339.

13 *Dışişleri Bakanlığı Yıllığı 1964-1965*, p. 307.

14 Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, third edition, Fundația Academia Civică, București, 2010, p. 86.

Kars and Ardahan and demanded the review of the status of the Straits.¹⁵ This political context had effects in Turkish domestic policy as Turkish officials any sympathy with communist parties was perceived as a threat.¹⁶

Turkey had managed to ensure a smooth succession upon the death of the Republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1938 by electing İsmet İnönü as president but was facing an economic crisis because of the war. However, the transition to a multi-party political regime was shaking up Turkish political life.¹⁷

The changes in Bucharest produced by the seizure of power by the communists and the reluctance of Turkish officials to develop relations with a state that they perceived as an extension of the Soviet Union, created significant changes in terms of the life and work of the Romanian diplomats at the Embassy from Ankara and the Consulate in Istanbul. This article aims to show how the change of the political regime in Romania and the deterioration of Romanian-Turkish relations in the first years of the post-war period affected the activity of Romanian diplomats from the Romanian Consulate in Istanbul and the Embassy in Ankara.

The change of the Romanian diplomatic corps from the Republic of Turkey

The moment when the activity of the Romanian diplomacy in Turkey changed radically, was the recall from the post of the Romanian diplomats unwanted by the regime established in December 1947. This was, in fact, part of the political purge of the personnel from all the institutions that were not loyal to the communist regime. News about the dismissal of some Romanian diplomats from Turkey was published in the Turkish press since the end of December 1947. The situation was formalized through a press conference organized on December 31, 1947, at the headquarters of the Consulate General of Romania in Istanbul. During the conference, consul Petre Ionescu,

15 See Kâmuran Gürün, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri (1920-1953)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1991; Emanuel Ploeanu, *Politica Statelor Unite față de Turcia între anii 1943 și 1952*, Iași, Institutul European, 2009; Erel Tellal, "SSCB'yle İlişkiler", ed. Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası. Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, vol. 1, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 499-521.

16 Sabit Duman, "Stalin'in Ölümünden Sonra Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri", *XVIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi. Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, vol. IX Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 2022, p. 604.

17 Kemal H. Karpat, *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi. Sosyal, Kültürel, Ekonomik Temeller*, Timaş, İstanbul, 2010, p. 223-328.

vice-consul Vasile Bibescu, press attaché Aurel Decei¹⁸, head of service Elena Dumitrescu, official Emil Dorobanțu, in front of the Turkish and foreign press, declared that they are resigning and reaffirming their loyalty to King Mihai and that they do not want to work for an “illegitimate Government that has violated all human liberties.”¹⁹ In the article in the *Vatan* newspaper of January 1, 1948, it was shown that the moment of reading the declaration had been an emotional one, with the guards at the Consulate bursting into tears.²⁰

Details regarding the fate of the resigned Romanian diplomats began to appear in the Turkish press in the following days. Thus, according to the January 9, 1948, edition of the newspaper *Akşam*, whose editor-in-chief was for a time the Minister of Foreign Affairs Necmettin Sadak, consul Ionescu, who had been in Turkey for several months, preferred to emigrate to the USA rather than return to Romania. He arrived in New York with his wife, Liubița, on February 5, 1948.²¹ Vice-consul Bibescu who worked at the Consulate in Istanbul for 27 years, preferred to stay in Turkey and work at a bank or private company, the press attaché Decei, the administrative official Dimitrescu, Mr. Riza, the guard of the Consulate, who was a member of the Turkish community in Romania and worked at the Consulate for 27 years, all of them wanted to settle in Turkey.²²

All those who resigned, in addition to expressing their loyalty to King Mihai, accused the new Government of not sending their salaries for several months. The Ankara Embassy tried to avoid escalating the scandal and refuted the claims of the resigned diplomats. Ion Magheru, who was sent from the Embassy to take over the Consulate, stated that the resignations were for personal reasons and that they should not be given a political connotation. He stated that when the king abdicated, he did not also invite those who had sworn allegiance to him to resign. Regarding the salaries, Magheru indicated that they were not given “due to some reasons” without specifying

18 Aurel Decei (1905-1976) was an important Romanian Turkologist, author of several studies on the history of the Ottoman Empire. In 1944 he was appointed press attaché at the Romanian Embassy in Ankara. After the change of the regime in Bucharest, he preferred to stay in Turkey, where he got involved in the activities of the Romanian exile. In 1956, the Communist Security kidnapped him from West Germany where he was on a visit. In 1960 he was sentenced to death, then to hard labor. After being released in 1964, he worked at the Institute of History “N. Iorga” until he died in 1976. See Ioan Opriș, *Aurel Decei sau destinul disperării*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2004.

19 *BAR*, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimat 2a; *Tasvir*, January 1, 1948.

20 *BAR*, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimat 2a; *Vatan*, January 1, 1948.

21 *House Reports*, vol. 6 *Miscellaneous Reports on Private Bills*, II, Washington, United States Government Printing Office, 1995, Report No. 1233.

22 *BAR*, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimat 2a; *Akşam*, January 9, 1948.

what those were, though he said that “some sanctions may have been used” against those who were propagandizing against the regime or refused to return to Romania, although they have been asked to do so several times. The resigned staff did not let Magheru enter the Consulate, and he had to stay at the Tokatliyan hotel.²³ The resigned diplomats justified their decision by showing that Grigore Moisil received accreditation as an ambassador sent by King Mihai and that until he submitted the letters of accreditation from the new Government, he is not recognized in Turkey.²⁴ From the consulted documents it does not appear that ambassador Moisil had to obtain the accreditation again. Regarding the situation at the Consulate, the resigned diplomats eventually vacated the building.

According to the Turkish press, on January 15, 1948, the new Romanian consul in Istanbul, Ionel Crişan arrived in Turkey. He refused to make statements regarding the situation of the resigned Romanian diplomats, saying that “he is not good at politics”. Crişan did not stay very long in Istanbul, in fact, he was working as *gerant* of the Consulate, shortly after being appointed counselor at the Embassy in Ankara and then *chargé d'affaires*.²⁵

While he was in Istanbul, Crişan made efforts to solve the problems the Consulate was facing. The return to normal functioning after the protests of the resigned diplomats happened gradually. The last to leave the consulate building was consul Petre Ionescu, who also had his residence there. He handed over the building to Magheru at the end of the first week of January 1948. Magheru took over “with a report” from Ionescu “only the situation of consular stamps, of the receipts, of the seal, and of the stamp. The rest of the archive and all objects or furniture in the Consulate were taken over without a report.”²⁶ In his report of February 2, 1948, Ionel Crişan complained about the fact that the former vice consul, Vasile Bibescu, did not hand over the recent archive and that because of this situation the new consul could not “orient himself sufficiently in his attributions”.²⁷

Solving the issue of the outstanding salaries of the resigned diplomats was another challenge that Crişan had to face. This situation affected the image of the Romanian

23 BAR, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimata 2a; *Akşam*, January 9, 1948.

24 BAR, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimata 2b; *Kudret*, January 8, 1948.

25 BAR, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimata 2a; *Vatan*, January 15, 1948.

26 *Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe (AMAE)*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949), (The post-1945 documents from this fond are not yet inventoried and the pages are not numbered.).

27 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

Consulate in Istanbul. However, after the case was widely discussed in the Turkish press, Crişan met with Ionescu and Bibescu having “calm” discussions, without a “scandal in the Turkish press”.²⁸ The diplomats who demanded their monetary rights also called on the services of Turkish lawyers. One of them, Mustafa Tunalı, was no stranger to the realities in Romania, being, very likely, a close relative of the former minister of Turkey in Bucharest, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, and a member of the Turkish community in Romania who had emigrated to Turkey.²⁹ Advised by their lawyers, the resigned diplomats also sent a summons addressed to the Romanian ambassador in which they pointed out that, unlike the Embassy, the Consulate does not enjoy diplomatic immunity and that if they do not receive their outstanding salaries, they will sue the Romanian state “being able to seize and sale the furniture and the building of the Consulate”.³⁰ The summons was not sent through the Turkish institutions, but “directly to Mr. Ambassador”.³¹

Very likely, this was a strategy to put pressure on Romanian officials to solve the salary problem as quickly as possible. Moreover, the lawyer Mustafa Tunalı had a meeting with Ionel Crişan, to whom he proposed “to arrange things in such a way that the plaintiffs can collect the money they are due and at the same time avoid a trial that would give rise to a new press campaign that would be unfavorable to the Romanian State”. Moreover, the Turkish lawyer also told Crişan that a possible lawsuit would be filed against him.³² Both the summons addressed to the ambassador, as well as a possible lawsuit filed against Crişan regarding the recovery of the outstanding salaries of the resigned diplomats, had no legal basis. These were actions aimed at putting pressure on the Romanian diplomatic missions in Turkey, especially from the perspective of a possible scandal in the Turkish press. Very likely, the problem was solved because there were no more initiatives in this regard from the resigned diplomats, and the Turkish press did not address the topic anymore.

The disapproval of the regime change in Bucharest was also conveyed to the Istanbul Consulate through less orthodox methods. Thus, on April 22, 1948, the old sign on which the name “Royal Consulate of Romania” was inscribed was changed with a new one on which “Consulate of the Romanian People’s Republic” was written, but in less

28 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

29 Metin Omer, *Emigrarea turcilor și tătariilor din România în Turcia între cele două Războaie Mondiale*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2020, p. 20-21.

30 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

31 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

32 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

than 24 hours it was stolen. The theft was reported to the Governor of the Istanbul region, but the Turkish institution did not even formulate a response.³³

The new diplomats on the radar of the press and the Turkish authorities

With the change of the diplomatic staff from the Consulate General of Romania in Istanbul and from the Embassy in Ankara, the Turkish press started a campaign to denigrate and discredit the Romanian diplomats who remained in office, presenting them either as persons with non-Romanian origins promoting thus the idea that the communist regime in Romania is not specific to the Romanian people, or as agents of Moscow. Also, the Turkish press tried to promote the idea that Romanian diplomats in Turkey have a legitimacy problem as they needed a new accreditation following the political changes in Bucharest. For example, in the article “Kızıl Tehlike Var” (There is a red danger) published in the weekly *Haftalık Gazete* on February 28, 1948, it was shown that the Romanian Embassy “was cleaned of classical diplomats left from the Tătărescu period”³⁴, a special case being “the situation of His Excellency Ambassador Grigore Moisil”, who had been accredited to the Turkish Government during the reign of King Mihai. The article stated that “after the abdication of the King and the declaration of the Republic he was supposed to present his letter of credence again, but he did not do so.”³⁵

As for the campaign to discredit the Romanian diplomats, it had as its central point the idea that the representatives sent from Bucharest do not pursue the interests of their country, but “are agents of the Cominform”. This idea can be found in almost all the Turkish press, except the left-wing newspapers and magazines, which, were closed by the Government in Ankara shortly after they started to be printed. Romanian diplomats in Turkey have emphasized this perception of the Turkish press in several reports.³⁶ In addition, the press that was read in Turkey presented the Romanian diplomats suggesting that their activity has nothing to do with diplomacy. In this context, in the magazine *Europe Amérique* of August 7, 1947, it was stated that at the Romanian Embassy “everything is directed by Sterle Vasiliu, who is related to the M.V.D. (The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR), the former N.K.V.D. (The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs), which also has its headquarters at the Romanian Embassy, and that everyone trembles before her, even Ambassador Moisil.”³⁷ In another article, which was

33 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

34 Gheorghe Tătărescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania.

35 N.Y.E., “Kızıl Tehlike Var”, in *Haftalık Gazete*, 3, February 28, 1948, p. 2, 10.

36 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 3-4 (1945-1948).

37 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 6 (1945-1948).

published at the beginning of 1948 in *Haftalık Gazete*, it was stated that “it was not lost sight of the fact that this young blonde woman, quite beautiful, inspired great respect and even fear in those who occupied even higher positions.”³⁸

These vilifications of the Romanian diplomats were not new and there had been attempts to stop them. On August 2, 1947, the Romanian ambassador to Turkey, Grigore Moisil, sent to Gheorghe Tătărescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, a note where he mentioned that in the articles published in the Turkish press with “attacks” on the Romanian Embassy “the name of Mrs. Vasiliu, who appears in the articles, was chosen at random from the names of our officials. Nothing in Ms. Vasiliu’s behavior justifies the attack” and that he already approached Turkish dignitaries to demand the normalization of the situation: “I contacted Mr. Hasan Saka, to whom I presented the articles. He confirmed to me that he had nothing bad to say about Mrs. Vasiliu and promised me that he would intervene immediately to stop the attacks and publications of this kind. We were able to obtain information that this promise was kept.”³⁹ But, as can be seen from the articles that continued to be published in the Turkish press, Moisil’s observation was not correct.

In some cases, to shroud the whole situation in mystery, the names of the officials concerned were not revealed. Thus, in an article published in the *Vatan* newspaper on April 19, 1948, the following was stated: “A counselor who is said to have two names and a young lady as an official arrived at the Romanian Embassy. The young lady eats table d’hôte at Karpiç⁴⁰ and drinks a bottle of beer every day. He is said to have received special diplomatic training. His facial features are cut, he wears uniform-like clothes, and he is said to speak Russian as well.”⁴¹ These articles did not only deal with the situation of the Romanian diplomats. They were part of a newsgroup in which the actions of all the diplomatic missions of the countries close to the Soviet Union were presented. They were meant to be a warning both to diplomats, whose work was hampered by this negative image, but also to Turkish citizens who might have harbored sympathies towards these regimes.

38 N.Y.E., “Türkiyede Kominforma”, *Haftalık Gazete*, 3, February 28, 1948, p. 2

39 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 5 (1946-1948).

40 Karpiç, with the official name of *Şehir Lokantası*, was the first modern restaurant in Ankara. Opened by an emigrant from Russia, Yuri Georges Karpovici, in 1928, it came to be known as “Karpiç”, after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a loyal customer, addressed the owner using this appellation. The restaurant was the meeting place of the diplomats in Ankara, politicians, and intellectuals.

41 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 3-4 (1945-1948).

Another aspect that the Turkish press tried to highlight was that the communist regime was not a traditional Romanian one, therefore neither were the representatives of the communist Government having any way to defend Romania's interests. Thus, for example, Ionel Crişan, first *gerant* of the Romanian Consulate in Istanbul, then counsellor and *chargé d'affaires* at the Embassy in Ankara, was presented as a doctor from Brăila with Jewish origins who later became Romanian by taking the name of Crişan, his only quality that counted for his appointment to a diplomatic post being the membership in the Communist Party.⁴²

A target around which an espionage story was woven was Hristache Zambetti, the person who succeeded Ionel Crişan as Romanian consul in Istanbul. He was presented as having “a life full of adventures”. According to *Vatan* newspaper, Zambetti (whose name, according to the Turkish media, was Zambetis) was born in Turkey, his father had a shoemaker's workshop for a long time in the Beyoğlu district. When Hristache was 8-9 years old, he moved to Romania with his family. The Turkish press also reported that in order to avoid military service, he changed his name to Cristian Vasilescu. Hristache Zambetti was also presented as working for the secret police since 1944, after the takeover of power by the communists becoming the head of the department dealing with “Turkey-Balkans”. A picture of Zambetti was published on the front page of the newspaper alongside a document showing a note dated March 31, 1947, addressed to the Romanian Consulate in Istanbul, in which a visa for Palestine was requested. He was traveling with “Lasl Luka” (László Luka⁴³) to attend an inter-parliamentary conference in Cairo. The paper states that Zambetti was participating as a member of the secret police.⁴⁴

The press articles were, in fact, an expression of the misgivings the Turkish authorities had about Zambetti. Moreover, in a meeting that ambassador Grigore Moisil had on May 31, 1948, with Fuad Carim, the Secretary General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was informed that “this person is undesirable in Turkey”.⁴⁵ In other discussions, Moisil even tried to justify the existence of two names for Zambetti, showing that it is a custom in Romania to add another name to “too common” surnames. Moisil's efforts to obtain the *agrément* for Zambetti were not only justified by a sense of duty, but also had a practical basis. In Moisil's opinion, “Zambetti, being a clever man, having skill and knowing Turkish, is very useful to us in Istanbul.”⁴⁶

42 *BAR*, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimat 2b; *Vatan*, September 24, 1948.

43 Vasile Luca (1898-1963), born László Luka, was a communist politician. He was vice-president of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Finance in the Government of Bucharest (1947-1952).

44 *BAR*, Arhiva Grigore C. Moisil, LXXI, imprimat 2b; *Vatan*, September 24, 1948.

45 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 20 (1945-1949).

46 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 20 (1945-1949).

Hristache Zambetti (or Cristea Zambeti, as he signed his reports) was eventually appointed to the position of Consul General of Romania in Istanbul. However, he maintained his position for a short period, being replaced the following year. Regarding the espionage allegations, the Turkish media and authorities were not wrong. Zambetti worked for *Serviciul Secret de Informații* (the Secret Intelligence Service) until the establishment of the communist regime in Romania, later continuing his career reaching high positions in the communist *Securitate*.⁴⁷ During his time in Istanbul, in addition to the espionage allegations, he also faced a shortage of staff at the Consulate. In a report dated July 5, 1948, he complained that the only workers at the General Consulate of Romania in Istanbul were him and “a maintenance man”, a similar situation never occurring at any other diplomatic representation.⁴⁸

The Turkish press was not the only one that tried to hinder the activity of the Romanian diplomats. In a report dated May 3, 1948, prepared by Ionel Crișan, *chargé d'affaires* of Romania in Ankara, regarding the attitude of the Turkish police towards the staff of the Consulate in Istanbul and the Embassy in Ankara, the actions of the Turkish authorities directed against the diplomatic staff were presented: “The Turkish police follow us step by step, everywhere we go, either to discover the possible connections we could make with the civilians or the members of the diplomatic corps, or to prevent us from making various acquaintances or connections, or in end to isolate us and create difficulties in relation to the procurement of housing etc.”⁴⁹ Crisan indicated that the Turkish police viewed all the activities as suspicious. For example, if a Romanian diplomat “sometimes came home very late” and “the light did not go out until very late”, it meant that he works a lot and “holds clandestine meetings with various people”. At the same time, the people who rented rooms to Romanian diplomats were “questioned” by the Turkish secret intelligence service regarding the reasons that led them to do so. Moreover, they were also subjected to pressure, the Turkish police warning them that “in the event that war breaks out between Turkey and Romania, they will be the first to be deported to concentration camps”.⁵⁰ In the conclusion of his report Crișan showed that the Turkish authorities were thus achieving their goal: “Indeed these methods make our work much more difficult and force us to limit ourselves to the minimum possible.”⁵¹

47 There are not many details about his career. His personnel file can be consulted here: http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/cadrede_securitatii/ZAMBETI%20HRISTACHE.pdf, 20 September 2021.

48 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

49 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 7 (1944-1948).

50 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 7 (1944-1948).

51 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 7 (1944-1948).

The causes of this attitude were correctly identified by ambassador Moisil. On June 18, 1948, in a note sent to the Foreign Minister Ana Pauker, he indicated that the treatment applied to the Romanian diplomats in Turkey is twofold: on the one hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey “has a very kind attitude, granting us all the immunities and having every solicitude for diplomatic and consular personnel,” but “the Turkish secret police are watching us closely and are sensibly seeking to prohibit contact between our officials and Turkish citizens.”⁵²

The Turkish authorities also managed to block the attempts to present a good image of the new regime in Romania. In a report dated November 27, 1948, drawn up by Ionel Crişan, *chargé d'affaires* at the Romanian Embassy in Ankara, concerning the distribution of “propaganda materials” (brochures, magazines, albums) regarding the situation in the P.R.R., he stated that “We rarely have the opportunity to find out if the material sent by us was at least read, or browsed.” The Romanian diplomat also pointed out that some packages arrived “violated” or late with missing materials. As for the readers, Crişan complained that the newspapers they received were read “almost exclusively” by the Romanian diplomatic staff. In Ankara there were only “5-6 Romanians” of which only one, George Zerva, former consul general, “today retired, he visits us”. In Istanbul, although there were more than 200 Romanians, “one cannot speak of a colony, but of a very disparate life, in which there are no ties between the Consulate and the citizens. Most of them do not even know Romanian, so we rarely have the opportunity to post the newspapers we receive.”⁵³ Crişan also showed that this type of activity was also blocked by the Turkish police who had benefited from the information provided by Nicoară Beldiceanu⁵⁴, one of the Romanian diplomats who had refused to return from their post in Romania and preferred to stay in Turkey.⁵⁵

However, the distribution of propaganda materials regarding the situation in Romania did not seem to be the main objective of the Romanian diplomacy in Turkey. In the same report, Crişan asked the Ministry to send “for personal use” on a regular basis, “works that appeared more recently and are part of the Marxist-Leninist library.”⁵⁶

52 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 7 (1944-1948).

53 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 200-212 (1945-1949).

54 Nicoară Beldiceanu (1920-1994) important Romanian specialist in the history of the Ottoman Empire. He was a researcher at the Institute of Balkan Studies in Bucharest. In 1946 he was appointed press attaché of Romania in Turkey. In 1948, as a result of the order to return to the country, he preferred to stay in Turkey. He later settled in France. See Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, “Beldiceanu, Nicoară (1920-1994)”, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Ankara, 2020, p. 181.

55 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 200-212 (1945-1949).

56 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 200-212 (1945-1949).

The answer to Crişan's request was formulated on January 27, 1949, by Cristina Luca Boico, the Director of Press and Cultural Relations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. Boico mentioned that Crişan's requests had been accepted and drew attention "to the importance of studying and deepening the Romanian material by the entire staff of the Legation, for which he is primarily intended." She also indicated that in the future more materials useful for "raising the political and cultural level of officials at the Ankara Embassy"⁵⁷ will be sent.

When the political regime changes, so do the holidays

The opposition of the Turkish authorities to the new regime in Bucharest can also be traced in the attitude towards the holidays marked by the Romanian diplomatic missions. If until the end of 1947 the invitations to receptions organized by the Romanian Consulate or Embassy were honored at the highest level and benefited from a wide presentation in the Turkish press, after the change of regime this attitude changed also. Not only that the invitations were no longer honored by the high-level politicians, but they were presented in the Turkish press in antithesis to the events organized by the Romanians in Turkey, opponents of the regime installed in Bucharest.

For example, on May 20, 1947, ambassador Moisil sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gheorghe Tătărescu, the report of the consul general from Istanbul, Mircea Trifon, regarding the celebration of May 10⁵⁸ at the Consulate General in Istanbul. Moisil mentioned that the reception given by the Romanian consul was highly appreciated. More than 200 people took part including the vali (prefect) of Istanbul, Admiral Hilmi Üler, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, the Director General of Customs, the consular corps, the professors at the Istanbul University and, "what is to be emphasized, many Turks". Moisil also pointed out that in this way "the traditional string of celebrating May 10 is resumed" because it had not been celebrated since 1941, "and in previous years it was celebrated mainly in the framework of the Romanian colony"⁵⁹.

A year later, the situation completely changed. According to the report written by Ionel Crişan, on June 5, 1948, the Romanian diplomats who had remained loyal to King Mihai after his abdication and preferred to stay in Turkey, and the refugees who had fled

57 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 200-212 (1945-1949).

58 On May 10, 1866, Prince Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen took the oath of allegiance before the Parliament and was proclaimed ruler of Romania. In March 1881, the Parliament voted to transform the country from a Principality to a Kingdom, and on May 10, 1881, Prince Carol was crowned king of Romania. May 10 was the National Day of Romania between 1866 and 1947.

59 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 3-4 (1945-1948).

Romania and were in Istanbul, celebrated May 10 in a festive setting. This time the action was described as organized by some “Romanian traitors from Istanbul” led by Aurel Decei, the former press attaché from the Romanian Embassy in Ankara. In his report, Crişan also mentioned that Decei “wanted to once again express his anti-popular and anti-democratic feelings in a solemn meeting. In his demagogic and dismissive speech, Decei once again attacked the democratic regime in Romania, the Minister of National Defense Mr. Emil Bodnăraş, the USSR and tried to highlight the importance that the Hohenzollern dynasty would have had for Romania.”⁶⁰

To demonstrate that the event was supported by the Turkish authorities, in addition to noting the presence of Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, the former minister and ambassador of Turkey in Romania, then deputy of Istanbul, Crişan also showed that the hall where the event was held was “paved with the two portraits: of Mihai and of the President of the Turkish Republic, İsmet İnönü, sitting next to each other, in sweet harmony.”⁶¹ The reason why the Turkish authorities allowed and even supported the organization of this event was correctly identified by Crişan: “today’s regime in the R.P.R. (Romanian People’s Republic) is not accepted by the Turks”, their motives, however, were erroneously explained: “(the Turks) wanted the regime of royal, bourgeois and landlord exploitation to exist in our country instead of a popular democracy and would prefer Romania and the USSR to have the same bad relations as before the war”.⁶² In order to avoid the occurrence of similar situations in the future, Crişan informed the Embassies, Legations in Turkey, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey “what is the meaning of May 9⁶³ and why May 10 is not a national holiday anymore.”⁶⁴ The note did not have the intended effect. A year later, on May 10, 1949, the Consulate General of Romania in Istanbul continued to receive congratulations on the occasion of May 10 from the Istanbul Prefecture, but also from other Consulates in the city.⁶⁵

The situation has changed, however, because of the will of Ankara officials. In his report of June 18, 1949, regarding the “political, economic and social situation of Turkey”, Dorel Oprescu, *gerant* of the Consulate General of the Romanian People’s Republic (R.P.R.) in Istanbul, showed that no Turkish official participated in the May 10

60 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 3-4 (1945-1948).

61 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 3-4 (1945-1948).

62 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 3-4 (1945-1948).

63 Independence Day in Romania and the commemoration of the Soviet victory against Nazi Germany in 1945.

64 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 3-4 (1945-1948).

65 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

celebration organized by the Romanian refugees. He also stated that the attitude of the Turkish authorities toward the Consulate “is completely changed”. Protocol relations had been resumed, the “head of the office” was invited to all official events, and the “heads of the authorities” responded positively to the invitations. The reason for this change of attitude was correctly identified in the report: “stressed by the bad economic situation and wanting to resume exchanges with the R.P.R., the Turks adopted the new attitude.”⁶⁶ At the same time, we could also add that the desire to have non-conflictual relations with a state located near its borders also contributed to the normalization of relations. This does not mean that the close pre-war relations have been resumed. Simply put, both Ankara and Bucharest accepted the new political situation and sought to normalize their relations.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that the different political options of Romania and Turkey after the Second World War prevented the establishment of close relations between the two countries. This also had repercussions on the activity of Romanian diplomats in Turkey. Even if at the official level the authorities in Ankara did not initiate direct measures against the Romanian diplomatic envoys, public opinion through the media exerted constant pressure on them, putting their actions in a bad light and presenting them as enemies of Turkey, thus preventing them from achieving their goals.

The political changes in Romania have put the Romanian diplomats in Turkey in a difficult situation. Faced with the decision to return to the country where an uncertain situation awaited them, many of them chose to remain loyal to the values and principles they believed in. Thus, they started an opposition movement against the communist regime in Bucharest. The Turkish press, also encouraged by the authorities in Ankara, presented them as true representatives of their country, in contrast to the diplomats loyal to the communist regime who were seen as promoters of foreign interests.

This conflictual period in which the initiatives of the Consulate General of Romania in Istanbul and the Embassy of Romania in Ankara were hampered ended at the beginning of 1949. The acceptance by Turkish officials of the reality that the regime established in Bucharest could no longer be changed and, above all, the need to find partners to revive their economy damaged during the war, and the desire to ensure security in the region were the impulses that normalized diplomatic relations between

66 *AMAE*, fond 71/Turcia, vol. 213-220 (1945-1949).

the two countries. Even if more time had to pass until relations at the political level improved, starting from 1949 Romanian diplomats in Turkey could, at least, carry out their activities within normal limits.

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