

## ROMANIA'S RELATIONS WITH TÜRKIYE UNDER THE PRESSURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT (AUGUST 1939 - NOVEMBER 1940): FROM ALLIANCE TO MUTUAL SUSPICIONS

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**Abstract.** *The main moments that mark the evolution of the Romanian-Turkish relations in this period are linked in particular to USSR's conduct in the region and to the way, similar in some respects, but predominantly different, in which the two states reacted to Soviet expansionism. Thus, until mid-1940, Türkiye continued to be a loyal ally for Romania, a fact that was also demonstrated in the context of the "Bessarabian crisis" on 27 June 1940. After that point, bilateral relations went downhill for exogenous reasons. However, some elements of rapprochement persisted, such as shared fears of USSR, or certain bilateral trade interests.*

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### PRELIMINARIES

The economic and political agreements concluded by Germany and USSR on 21 August, and August 23/24 1939, respectively, paved the way for the Second World War, opening a sequence of dramatic developments in the geographical area between the Baltic and the Black Sea, which was the subject of the so-called secret additional protocol to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, which concerned the delimitation of spheres of influence between the two totalitarian great powers. Reading, however superficially, the three articles of the document itself (the fourth article dealt with the secret nature of the arrangements)<sup>2</sup>, shows a glaring contrast between the third article and the two preceding articles. Thus, while in the case of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and the territories of inter-war Poland, respectively, the two spheres

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<sup>2</sup> *Istoria politicii externe românești în date* [History of Romanian foreign policy in data], Ion Calafeteanu, editor in chief, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 2003 (hereinafter, *I.P.E.R.D.*), pp. 316-317; Vasile Sturza (editor), *Basarabia și destinul său secret. Mărturii și documente istorice* [Bessarabia and its secret destiny. Historical testimonies and documents], Bucharest, Litera Publishing House, 2016, pp. 224-225.

of interest were strictly demarcated, the text suddenly becomes ambiguous as far as South-Eastern Europe is concerned, which reflects a certain inability to compromise on the part of the signatories, perhaps doubled by the hope of each of them that the initial stipulations would be clarified favorably at a later date.

The ambiguity of the provisions made in Article 3 of the secret additional protocol to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, together with other factors, such as the Wehrmacht's rapid successes on the Western Front in the spring and summer of 1940, would bring Germany and USSR, from mid-1940 onwards, into a bitter rivalry for hegemony over the Balkans and the Black Sea area, which was to prove insurmountable as Britain continued the war against Germany (and Italy, from 10 June 1940)<sup>3</sup>. From November 12-26, 1940, the German-Soviet partnership entered an irreversible downward slope<sup>4</sup>, a trend that culminated in the launch of Operation *Barbarossa* on 22 June 1941.

All these political-diplomatic and military developments influenced, inevitably and to a substantial extent, the positions of Romania and Türkiye, respectively, in international relations, and implicitly, the nature of relations between the two South-Eastern European states. While in August 1939 Türkiye represented – for (still) Greater Romania – the most important regional ally, on 23 November 1940 the Romanian state, severely amputated territory-wise in the summer, joined the Tripartite Pact initiated by Germany, Italy and Japan on 27 September<sup>5</sup>, while Türkiye remained faithful to its alliance with Great Britain; officially, both south-eastern European states were still keeping out of the ever growing conflagration, yet each of them was already practising non-belligerency in favor of a Great Power directly engaged in the war, a situation which, in Romania's case, would turn into co-belligerency seven months later.

At the European level, the period between the total liquidation of Czechoslovakia, in mid-March 1939, and the conclusion of the German-Soviet agreements, in August of the same fateful year, was dominated, in terms of political and diplomatic topicality, by the tripartite Franco-British-Soviet negotiations, intended to form a strong anti-revisionist front to counteract Hitlerite Germany's tendencies towards expansion and hegemony. Those negotiations were viewed favorably both in Ankara and in Bucharest, but certain geopolitical circumstances (i.e. geographical proximity to Germany) and other

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<sup>3</sup> Florin Constantiniu, 1941. *Hitler, Stalin și România. România și geneza operațiunii „Barbarossa”* [1941. Hitler, Stalin and Romania. Romania and the genesis of Operation Barbarossa], Bucharest, „Univers Enciclopedic” Publishing House, 2002, pp. 113-154.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *Istoria Balcanilor. Secolul XX* [History of the Balkans. 20th century], translated by Mihai Eugen Avădanei, Iași, European Institute Publishing House, 2000, pp. 211-214; Laurențiu Constantiniu, *Uniunea Sovietică, între obsesia securității și a insecurității* [Soviet Union between security obsession and insecurity], with a foreword by Acad. Dinu C. Giurescu, Bucharest, Corint Publishing House, 2010, pp. 113-115; V. Sturza (editor), *op.cit.*, pp. 387-417.

<sup>5</sup> *I.P.E.R.D.*, p. 331.

circumstances (i.e. non-recognition by USSR of the common border along the Dniester) required the Romanian government to be more cautious than the Turkish government. Thus, the economic treaty concluded with Germany on March 23 was evaluated in very harsh terms in Turkish circles (“detrimental to Romanian interests”)<sup>6</sup>, while in Bucharest it was considered a useful instrument in order to dissociate Germany from the small revisionist states lying in Romania's immediate vicinity, namely Hungary and Bulgaria<sup>7</sup>.

At the regional level, Türkiye firmly manifested its readiness to support Romania in case of Bulgarian aggression, regardless of the attitude of Yugoslavia and Greece, or other circumstances, a fact reiterated by Turkish leaders, not least in direct talks with the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Georgi Kyosseivanov, who visited Türkiye from 17 to 19 March; at the same time, however, the Turkish government was assiduously seeking a way to attract Bulgaria in the Balkan Entente<sup>8</sup>. In the space of four months and a few days, from 8 April to 11 August 1939, three high-level Romanian-Turkish diplomatic contacts took place, namely two visits by the Foreign Minister, Grigore Gafencu, and a visit by the Head of State, King Carol II<sup>9</sup>.

On 13 August 1939, Prime Minister Armand Călinescu noted in his diary that General David Popescu and Colonel Paul Leonida, delegated by the General Staff to go to Ankara, had returned from the Turkish capital with results that were considered “very good”, first of all with firm promises to concentrate more than 200 Turkish battalions in Eastern Thrace in order to neutralize Bulgaria in the event of war in Europe.

Concern with avoiding any situation that was likely to lead to direct conflict with Soviet Union was a constant feature of Turkish foreign policy in the interwar period, and, from that perspective, the secret annex to the Balkan Pact was no exception. However, the reservation categorically expressed on 9 February 1934<sup>10</sup> had subsequently been toned down in an official letter sent on 3 November 1937 by the Chief of the Turkish Army General Staff, Field Marshal Fevzi Çakmak, to his Romanian counterpart, General Ioan Sichitiu. The

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<sup>6</sup> Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania (hereinafter, A.M.F.A.R.), fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, pages 8-9 (documents from 8-9 May 1939).

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Haynes, *Politica României față de Germania (1936-1940)* [Romania's policy towards Germany (1936-1940)], translated by Cristina Abobaie, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2003, pp. 74-87.

<sup>8</sup> George Ungureanu, *Problema Cadrilaterului în contextul relațiilor româno-bulgare (1919-1940)* [The Quadrilateral Issue in the context of Romanian-Bulgarian relations (1919-1940)], Brăila, Istros Publishing House, 2009, pp. 333-341.

<sup>9</sup> *I.P.E.R.D.*, pp. 312-316.

<sup>10</sup> Gheorghe Nicolescu, Alexandru Oșca, *Criză în Balcani? Tratatate, convenții militare și protocoale secrete (1934-1939)* [Crisis in the Balkans? Treaties, military conventions and secret protocols (1934-1939)], Pitești, Vlasie Publishing House, 1994, pp. 34-35, 106.

document in question contained the Turkish side's commitment to direct military action against Bulgaria in the event of a joint Soviet-Bulgarian aggression against Romania<sup>11</sup>.

The Soviet initiative to conclude a Black Sea Pact, grouping (only) the four littoral states, which was launched at the beginning of February 1939<sup>12</sup> was evaluated differently in Ankara and Bucharest. In the context of bilateral discussions on the advisability of an attempt to improve Romanian-Soviet relations through Türkiye, the Romanian representatives consistently and categorically rejected the suggestion of their Turkish interlocutors to show their willingness to join the pact proposed by Moscow, as a gesture of goodwill aimed at attracting the goodwill of the great Eastern neighbor. That was the position expressed both by Grigore Gafencu, during his visit to Türkiye in mid-June<sup>13</sup>, and by Charles II, during his talks with the Turkish president on 11 August, which led İnönü to consider the chances were slim that USSR would accept the recognition of the Romanian-Soviet border at the Dniester under such conditions<sup>14</sup>.

Therefore, on the eve of the German-Soviet rapprochement of August 1939, Türkiye was a reliable regional ally for Romania and a credible intermediary in the difficult relationship with Soviet Union, which was engaged in alliance negotiations with the Great Western Democracies.

But hopes of a tripartite Franco-British-British-Soviet understanding were to be completely shattered by the conclusion of the German-Soviet agreements, followed by the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, in early September. In less than one month, Poland was wiped off the map of the old continent.

#### **THE ROMANIAN-TURKISH ALLIANCE AND THE CHALLENGES OF WORLD WAR (SEPTEMBER 1939-JUNE 1940)**

Under the new conditions, the Romanian government set itself a set of diplomatic objectives, which are most faithfully reflected and summarized by the "Neutral Bloc" project, launched at the end of October 1939<sup>15</sup>, but illustrative for a period of more than half a year, from September 1939 to the spring of 1940: maintaining neutrality and friendly relations with the three belligerent Great Powers and USSR, increasing cohesion within the Balkan

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<sup>11</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund *The Balkan Entente*, vol. 6, ll. 322-323; *I.P.E.R.D.*, p. 302.

<sup>12</sup> Marilynn Giroux Hitchens, *Germany, Russia and the Balkans. Prelude to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Agression Pact*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1983, pp. 115-116.

<sup>13</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, l. 169

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 189-204.

<sup>15</sup> *I.P.E.R.D.*, p. 320.



Entente, achieving détente in relations with Hungary and Bulgaria, and cooperation with Italy, seen as the only power able and willing to halt Soviet expansion towards the Balkans<sup>16</sup>.

In the meantime, Şükrü Saracoğlu's long and unsuccessful visit to USSR took place, from 25 September to 17 October 1939, which had been followed, on 19 October, by the conclusion of the trilateral pact between Great Britain, France and Türkiye, as a corollary to the official bilateral declarations of May 12 and June 23.

The Soviet-Turkish talks in the fall of 1939 emphasized the new objectives of USSR concerning Türkiye, in the context of the subsequent diplomatic turn in August. Essentially, Stalin and Molotov demanded from Saracoğlu that he should diminish Türkiye's sovereignty, particularly over the Straits, by installing Soviet military bases in the vicinity of the Straits and excluding any military presence in the Black Sea by countries that did not lie along its coast, and also that the Turkish state should distance itself from Great Britain, France and its Balkan allies, primarily Romania, going so far as to reconsider some of the commitments it had previously undertaken<sup>17</sup>.

On 19 October 1939, the trilateral treaty between Great Britain, France and Republic of Türkiye was finalized. Article 3 of this document stipulated that Türkiye would cooperate with Great Britain and France in the event that they engaged in military action on the basis of the guarantees unilaterally given to Romania and Greece on 13 April 1939. At the initiative of the Turkish side, the famous "Russian clause" was inserted into the text of the treaty,<sup>18</sup> which showed the Ankara regime's willingness not to risk a serious deterioration in relations with USSR, despite Moscow's significantly harshened attitude in bilateral relations. At any rate, the strengthening of Türkiye's ties with Great Britain and France risked increasing old differences within the Balkan Entente, in particular the Turkish-Yugoslav ones, which prompted new efforts by Romanian diplomacy to settle these disagreements<sup>19</sup>. However, Türkiye remained outside the hostilities, despite certain commitments made on 19 October 1939, with the

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<sup>16</sup> Valeriu Florin Dobrinescu, Ion Pătroiu, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Relații politico-diplomatice și militare româno-italiene (1914-1947)* [Romanian-Italian political-diplomatic and military relations (1914-1947)], Pitești-Craiova, Intact Publishing House, 1999, pp. 257-259.

<sup>17</sup> M.G. Hitchens, *op.cit.*, pp. 236-242; Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Relațiile româno-turce între cele două războaie mondiale (1918-1944)* [Romanian-Turkish relations between the two world wars (1918-1944)], Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1993, pp. 98-103.

<sup>18</sup> *I.P.E.R.D.*, p. 320.

<sup>19</sup> Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanska Antanta* [The Balkan Entente], Belgrade, Contemporary History Institute, 1986, p. 333.

Ankara government constantly, pertinently and successfully invoking the inadequate preparation and equipment of its own army<sup>20</sup>.

Türkiye's response to Romania's diplomatic initiative concerning the formation of a "Bloc of Neutrals", which would have included the Balkan states of the Balkan Entente, plus Bulgaria, Hungary and Italy, did not come until 18 December, two days after that of Greece and three days after that of Yugoslavia; although clearly favorable, that response, like those received from Athens and Belgrade, was belated, as the ambitious regional project had already been abandoned by Romanian diplomacy, due to the unfavorable general context<sup>21</sup>. The Romanian diplomatic initiative had from the very beginning been confronted by the categorical hostility of USSR, then by the unfavorable attitude of Germany, which also led to the disinterest of Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria.<sup>22</sup>

The issue of the attitude of third states, including Türkiye, in case of Soviet aggression against Romania, became more and more acute in the winter of 1939-1940. Thus, on 14 December 1939, responding to a request from the Romanian minister in London, V. V. Tilea, the British government made it known to the Romanian government that the unilateral guarantees granted eight months earlier to Romania also referred, in principle, to the eastern border, but that the granting of effective military aid was conditional on Italy's neutrality and Türkiye's agreement to open the Straits to the Franco-British fleet<sup>23</sup>. However, given the reiteration of the famous "Russian clause" in the text of the Anglo-French-Turkish treaty of 19 October 1939, it was highly unlikely that Türkiye would adopt such an attitude. In their discussions with Romanian representatives, Turkish officials gave partly encouraging, and partly evasive answers on the matter, showing that they had been sounded out by the Soviets and had given them evasive answers designed to induce them to be cautious<sup>24</sup>.

On 10 January 1940, lieutenant-colonel Traian Teodorescu, Romania's military attaché in Türkiye, finalized a study on a possible war in South-Eastern Europe, analyzing four variants: 1. A Soviet attack on Romania 2. A joint Soviet-Bulgarian attack on Romania 3. A joint German-Hungarian attack on Romania 4. A joint German-Soviet attack on Romania. The Romanian military attaché was optimistic that Türkiye would be likely to come to Romania's aid in the event of Soviet aggression, at least allowing supplies of arms and

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<sup>20</sup> Antonello Biagini, *Istoria Turciei contemporane* [History of contemporary Türkiye], translated by Ioana Mândrescu, Cluj-Napoca, Accent Publishing House. 2005, p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> V.Fl. Dobrinescu, I. Pătroi, Gh. Nicolescu, *op.cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>22</sup> G. Ungureanu, *op.cit.*, pp. 342-345.

<sup>23</sup> Corneliu Mihail Lungu, Ioana Alexandra Negreanu (editors), *România în jocul Marilor Puteri (1939-1940). Documente (1938-1941)* [Romania in the game of the Great Powers (1939-1940). Documents (1938-1941)], with an introduction by Dinu C. Giurescu, Bucharest, „Curtea Veche” Publishing House, doc. 33, pp. 209-213.

<sup>24</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/Türkiye (1920-1944), vol. 61, ll. 257-267.

ammunition and the passage of the British and French fleets through the Straits; a Franco-British attack on the Soviet Caucasus was considered unlikely. In the event of a Soviet-Bulgarian aggression, Türkiye would certainly attack Bulgaria. In case of German-Hungarian aggression, it was to be expected, according to Tr. Teodorescu's assessments, a direct and massive support from Great Britain, France and Türkiye. Even in the most pessimistic scenario, that of a German-Soviet aggression, lieutenant-colonel Teodorescu remained optimistic, considering it probable that Türkiye would engage in the war against the two totalitarian colossuses, since a joint German-Soviet offensive towards Romania and the Balkans would have represented an existential threat for Türkiye<sup>25</sup>.

From 2 to 4 February 1940, the regular annual meeting of the Permanent Council of the Balkan Entente was held in Belgrade.

Despite differences of opinion between the representatives of the participating states, particularly between Türkiye and Yugoslavia, the Belgrade meeting ended with the unanimous decision to extend the Balkan Pact for seven years; also, the Greek proposal for a joint study by senior military officials of the four states of possible joint defense in the event of aggression by a power or powers outside the Balkan Peninsula was also accepted confidentially<sup>26</sup>.

Immediately after this meeting, Saracoğlu circulated the version according to which Grigore Gafencu had agreed to satisfy Bulgarian territorial claims to Southern Dobruja at the end of the war, because of the "logical and understandable" nature of these claims. Later, Gafencu would partially refute this version, claiming that he had only advocated postponing any border discussions to the post-conflict period, without having made any concrete territorial promises<sup>27</sup>.

The focus of Soviet diplomatic preoccupations on the Bessarabia issue in the spring of 1940 was accompanied by the improvement of the attitude towards Türkiye and, respectively, by the initiation of negotiations meant to establish economic and political relations with Yugoslavia, in order to further isolate the Romanian state<sup>28</sup>. In his famous 29 March 1940 speech, before making the well-known references to Bessarabia, V. M. Molotov briefly and positively characterized the relations of USSR with Türkiye and Iran, mentioning bilateral

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<sup>25</sup> Romanian National Military Archives – 'General Grigore Constandache' Central Archive Depot of Pitești (hereinafter, R.N.M.A. – C.A.D.P.), Collection of *Studies and searches concerning the Romanian army* (hereinafter, *Collection XIV*), dossier no. 345/1940, ll. 6-23.

<sup>26</sup> *I.P.E.R.D.*, pp. 321-322.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Stănciugel, *Lumea balcanică în viziunea și activitatea diplomatului Vasile Stoica* [The Balkan world in the vision and activity of diplomat Vasile Stoica], Bucharest, Collias Publishing House, 2008, pp. 178-179; G. Ungureanu, *op.cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>28</sup> Eliza Campus, *Din politica externă a României (1913-1947)* [Romania's foreign policy (1913-1947)], Bucharest, Political Publishing House, 1980, pp. 414-415.

agreements with those states<sup>29</sup>. The change in Soviet Union's attitude towards Türkiye was also noted by Gheorghe Davidescu in a telegram dated 8 April<sup>30</sup>. Towards the end of May, Ş. Saracoğlu declared, during a meeting of the Republican People's Party (the only political party in Türkiye, at that time), that relations with USSR had improved considerably<sup>31</sup>.

In their discussions with the Romanian representatives, high-ranking Turkish officials (e.g. Şükrü Saracoğlu) tried to temper their interlocutors' apprehensions about USSR, citing the Red Army's dysfunctional performance in the Finnish campaign<sup>32</sup>, which the head of Turkish diplomacy did shortly after Molotov's March 29 speech<sup>33</sup>. However, through other lower-ranking Turkish sources in Bucharest in April and May 1940, signals were reaching Bucharest, via other lower-ranking Turkish sources, which were hardly reassuring, concerning the attitude of Soviet Union and troop movements east of the Dniester<sup>34</sup>.

At the same time, the proposal made by the Romanian side during the quadripartite meeting in Belgrade intended to discuss the possibilities of Romanian-Turkish air-naval cooperation in the event of a Soviet attack on Romania, did not receive any concrete response from the Turkish side; after an evasive reply by Fevzi Çakmak on 25 March ("The matter has been discussed"), later explained as a confusion, the talks were practically postponed until the next military meeting of the Balkan Alliance, which was to be held in June or early July in Athens<sup>35</sup>. Instead, as the Chief of the Romanian General Military Staff, General Florea Țenescu, pointed out in an address to Foreign Minister Gr. Gafencu on 30 April 1940, the rapid succession of military events required, quite on the contrary, the adoption of rapid measures to prevent possible (and in fact increasingly likely) aggression; in conclusion, General Țenescu called for the "fast clarification of the political framework", with a view to holding regional military meetings that would be quadripartite (reuniting the four member states of the Balkan Alliance), tripartite (excluding Yugoslavia, whose ambiguous and dilatory attitude raised doubts) or at least bilateral (Romanian-Turkish), and "to establish contact with Great Britain and France", the guarantor powers of Romania and Greece and also allies of Türkiye<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> V. Sturza (editor), *op.cit.*, pp. 270-271.

<sup>30</sup> *Apud* E. Campus, *op.cit.*, p. 415.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> R. Stănciugel, *op.cit.*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>33</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 345/1940, l. 224.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g. C. M. Lungu, I. Al. Negreanu (editors), *op. cit.*, doc. 62 and 66, pp. 265, 267-270.

<sup>35</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, l. 286.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 306-309.

Towards the end of May, against the background of the series of successes of the German troops on the Western Front, the question of a political (not only economic) collaboration with the *Reich* began to be raised in Bucharest.

An explicit communication to this effect was sent to Wilhelm Fabricius, the German minister in Bucharest, by Prime Minister Gheorghe Tătărescu himself, on 28 May, the day after the second bilateral Oil-Armament pact had been finalized<sup>37</sup>. Grigore Gafencu resigned and was replaced, as the head of Romanian diplomacy, by Ion Gigurtu, well-known as a philo-German<sup>38</sup>.

At the European level, June 1940 also saw the precipitation of trends that had been evident in the previous spring. Thus, on 10 June, Italy entered the war alongside Germany, on 22 June France capitulated, and on 26-27 June USSR sent Romania two final notes, following which, on 28 June, Red Army troops began to occupy Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, an operation which was completed in the days immediately following.

The capture and prompt disclosure by the Germans of French documents containing plans for an Anglo-French-Turkish attack against the Soviet Caucasus put the Turkish government in an awkward position. As a result, the trilateral pact of 19 October 1939 was denounced (France was virtually out of the war), but not the bilateral alliance with Britain (a nation that continued the war), the “Russian clause” being invoked, which, for different reasons, displeased both London and Moscow<sup>39</sup>. The British saw the ‘Russian clause’ as a pretext which would have allowed Türkiye to perpetually postpone its entry into the war, while the Soviets were displeased that they had not been consulted before the Russian clause was invoked, which they saw as a sign of the Turkish government’s distrust of USSR<sup>40</sup>. It is a well-known fact that, in the dramatic circumstances of 27 June 1940, Türkiye declared its readiness to take action against Bulgaria if the latter joined USSR in an aggression against Romania. The Turkish government’s response, much more categorical than those of the governments of Athens and especially Belgrade, was also mentioned during the two crown councils held in Bucharest on the said day<sup>41</sup>. On that day, the new Romanian ambassador, Radu Crutzescu, received assurances from Şükrü Saracoğlu that Türkiye would honor its obligations as an ally of Romania in the region, regardless of the attitude of Greece and Yugoslavia, and Turkish troops

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<sup>37</sup> *I.P.E.R.D.*, p. 323.

<sup>38</sup> E. Campus, *op.cit.*, pp. 527-529.

<sup>39</sup> Alesandru Duțu, Lenuța Nicolescu, Alexandru Oșca, Andrei Nicolescu (editors), *Atașaii militari transmit...* [The military attachés are transmitting...], vol. II (1938-1940), Bucharest, „Europa Nova” Publishing House, 2002, doc. 67-70, pp. 259-263.

<sup>40</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 345/1940, II. 371-372.

<sup>41</sup> Ion Mamina (editor), *Consilii de Coroană* [Crown Councils], Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, pp. 197-198, 203.

began to concentrate towards the border with Bulgaria<sup>42</sup>. The Romanian military attaché, Tr. Teodorescu, had information in this regard, including information about the movement of two more divisions to Thrace; the number of troops deployed in the European part of Türkiye reached 14 infantry divisions, plus a cavalry division and the only motorized division; in Turkish military circles there was information about concentrations of Bulgarian troops, equipped with numerous tanks, especially of Soviet origin, on the common border<sup>43</sup>. A Romanian military intelligence bulletin of 30 June 1940 confirmed the news of the Turkish cruiser *Yavuz* and three other smaller military vessels moving into the Black Sea<sup>44</sup>.

However, the final decision of the Romanian leadership to precipitately evacuate the territories claimed by the Soviets, thus avoiding a war with USSR, had been received with obvious relief in Ankara, as Colonel Traian Teodorescu observed in a report drawn up at the beginning of July; the Romanian military attaché, however, noted in the same document that Turkish fears of Soviet expansionist tendencies were growing, especially in the context in which the Germans had made public the Anglo-French-Turkish offensive plans for the Caucasus<sup>45</sup>. These ideas are also to be found, *grosso modo*, in a 5 July report by the new Romanian ambassador to Türkiye, Radu Crutzescu<sup>46</sup>.

### **JULY-AUGUST 1940: THE EFFECTIVE END OF THE ROMANIAN-TURKISH ALLIANCE**

The fear of Soviet aggression prompted the post-Kemalist regime of İsmet İnönü, in the aftermath of the capitulation of France, to promote a policy of balance between Great Britain and Germany, initiating in mid-1940 a gradual increase in the volume of trade with the German Reich, which had fallen sharply after the signing of the Turkish-British declaration of 12 May 1939<sup>47</sup>. In the case of Romania, the events of late June 1940 had lent a desperate character to the efforts to win the goodwill and protection of the Berlin-Rome Axis Powers. Thus, the positions of Türkiye and Romania in international relations began to drift apart, and this trend was to manifest itself in full from the autumn of 1940.

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<sup>42</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 62, ll. 14-15 (a synthesis drawn by Gh. I. Duca, on 17 January 1941).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 61, l. 342.

<sup>44</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., fund *General Military Staff - Division 2 Intelligence*, dossier no. 902/1940, l. 236.

<sup>45</sup> *Idem*, *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 345/1940, ll. 400-402.

<sup>46</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, ll. 345-346.

<sup>47</sup> Hakan Özden, *The diplomatic maneuvers of Türkiye in World War II*, in „Karadeniz Araştırmaları Dergisi” [Journal of Black Sea Studies], no. 37 (2013), pp. 94, 96 (available on the site <https://arastirmax.com>, accessed on 21.09.2024).



However, the common fear of Soviet expansionism, together with other factors, would allow and even facilitate certain forms and manifestations of cooperation and solidarity between Türkiye and Romania in the following years<sup>48</sup>.

On 2 July, Constantin Argetoianu, in his provisional position as head of Romanian diplomacy, sent a telegram with instructions to the Romanian Embassy in Ankara, focusing on the idea that “the change in the orientation of our foreign policy that is being prepared does not touch at all the foundations of the Balkan Entente and our ties of close friendship with the states that make it up”, and ending with the following exhortation: ‘You shall explain the self-evident reasons that justify Romania’s new direction’<sup>49</sup>.

Four days later, in a discussion with Mihail Manoilescu, Romania’s new Foreign Minister, Suphi Tanrıöver recommended that the Romanian state should be brought closer to Germany as quickly as possible and at any sacrifice, in order to prevent the occupation by USSR of other Romanian territories, primarily Dobruja, and the realization of the Soviet-Bulgarian territorial junction; in that context, the Turkish diplomat looked with resignation at the prospect of the dissolution of the Balkan Entente, hoping, however, for the maintenance of cordial bilateral relations between Romania and Türkiye<sup>50</sup>.

On the day before the Manoilescu-Tanrıöver discussion (5 July 1940), Radu Crutzescu had indicated, in his (already mentioned) report, the optimistic air of the Turkish diplomatic officials, who invoked two counterarguments to the comments about the Soviet threat to Türkiye, namely the argument of German interests in the Balkans and the Black Sea, and the argument of the British presence in the Mediterranean. The Romanian diplomat considered both of those (counter)arguments as superficial, and regarded the Bulgarian troop concentrations to the Turkish border as a maneuver intended to facilitate the Italian offensive in the Mediterranean, rather than a result of an alleged Soviet-Bulgarian collusion targeting Türkiye<sup>51</sup>. On 8 July, the military attaché Traian Teodorescu sent a note to ambassador Radu Crutzescu mentioning Türkiye’s attitude towards a hypothetical Soviet-British alliance; according to Colonel Teodorescu, such a prospect was viewed with hope in Turkish circles, but only on condition that the *statu quo* in the Black Sea area, in particular the Straits regime, was maintained, in accordance with the Montreux Convention from the summer of 1936<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Cătălin Calafeteanu, *România și „micile puteri” vecine (1940-1944)* [Romania and the neighboring ‘small powers’ (1940-1944)], Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 2011, p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Turkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, l. 343.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 350-351.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 346-348.

<sup>52</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 345/1940, ll. 405-408.

In his summary report for July 1940, Colonel Teodorescu pointed out that, while there had been no visible signs of dissatisfaction with the new course of Romanian foreign policy among the political and military officials in Türkiye, the situation was different in the press, with some periodicals including comments that had attracted diplomatic protests from the Romanian side, while others had limited themselves to expressing regret for the *de facto* dissolution of the Balkan Alliance<sup>53</sup>. Indeed, from July 1940 onwards, the role of this regional Balkan alliance became practically nil<sup>54</sup>.

During the month of July, according to Colonel Teodorescu, Türkiye's relations with USSR had evolved from concern and fear, immediately after the 'Bessarabian crisis', to a certain *détente*, with the Turkish political and military authorities determined to reject any territorial claim by any state, and convinced that Germany would encourage Soviet Union to attack Iran<sup>55</sup>. The order of battle of the troops deployed in the western parts of the country (Thrace, etc.) had not undergone any notable changes<sup>56</sup>, and during the Manoilescu-Tanrıöver meeting on 31 July 1940, the Turkish ambassador to Romania showed interest in the atmosphere in Rome and at the same time was concerned about the fate of the Turkish-Muslim population in Southern Dobruja, in view of the retrocession of this territory to Bulgaria<sup>57</sup>. At the beginning of August, however, there was a substantial increase in the number of Turkish troops deployed in Thrace and the Straits region, the number of large units deployed there rising, according to a Romanian military information bulletin dated 8 August 1940, to 10 army corps, including 22 complete infantry divisions and three in the process of being organized, namely a fortification brigade, a fortress-detachment, a cavalry division and the only motorized division (those probably having reduced strength)<sup>58</sup>.

August 1940 marked a new stage in the efforts of the Romanian monarchical regime to win the goodwill and protection from the Axis Powers, even at the cost of some territorial concessions to Hungary and Bulgaria.

In a report dated 14 August 1940, Colonel Traian Teodorescu reported, in the Turkish press, articles on the dissolution of the Balkan Entente, presented as an effect of Romania's tendencies to retrocede Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria, the Romanian state thus losing any interest in isolating Bulgaria on a regional

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 431-432.

<sup>54</sup> Ž. Avramovski, *op.cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>55</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 345/1940, ll. 432-433.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 434-439.

<sup>57</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, ll. 371-372.

<sup>58</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., fund, *General Military Staff-Division 2 Intelligence*, dossier no. 903/1940, ll. 639-640.

level; Şükrü Saracoğlu and other Turkish officials seemed more reserved on this point, blaming the press reports on German influence and propaganda<sup>59</sup>.

Two days before, even Radio Istanbul had broadcast a news item containing erroneous data on the ethnic composition of the population of Southern Dobruja, with the proportion of Romanians being greatly underestimated in favor of Bulgarians and Turks<sup>60</sup>. On 13 August 1940, Radu Crutzescu complained, in a discussion with Şükrü Saracoğlu, about the attitude of the Turkish press, considered as very detached or even indifferent to Romania's plight<sup>61</sup>. However, at the end of a report dated 17 August 1940, Colonel Teodorescu mentioned the concern of a number of Turkish military leaders about the shrinking land distance between USSR and Bulgaria, after the return of Southern Dobruja to Bulgarian jurisdiction<sup>62</sup>.

Two weeks later, the same officer noted the satisfaction, noticed in Türkiye, with the settlement of the Romanian-Bulgarian dispute, overshadowed however by a certain concern about the fate of ethnic Turks in Southern Dobruja; other concerns were linked to Italo-Hellenic tensions, while the development of Turkish-Soviet relations was viewed with optimism, and as far as the Romanian-Hungarian dispute over Transylvania was concerned, the prevailing view was that a just and lasting solution had to take into account ethnic proportions and a population exchange was needed<sup>63</sup>. On the domestic front, Colonel Teodorescu noted, for August 1940, the tightening of certain legal provisions of the Penal Code and the Code of Military Procedure and the finalization of the plan to build main railway lines<sup>64</sup>. In the military field, in addition to the change in the procedure of conscription, which became more expeditious, Traian Teodorescu mentioned the difficulties in importing arms and ammunition, in parallel with the low volume of domestic military production in Republic of Türkiye<sup>65</sup>.

#### **AUTUMN 1940: FORMAL END OF THE ROMANIAN-TURKISH ALLIANCE**

In addition to confirming the renunciation of Southern Dobruja, and in particular the loss of more than two-fifths of Transylvania, the Vienna Dictate of 29/30 August 1940, was also the first notable act on the part of the Axis Powers to accept Romania's entry into their fold, by guaranteeing the new

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<sup>59</sup>Idem, *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 345/1940, ll. 447-448.

<sup>60</sup>G. Ungureanu, *op.cit.*, p. 365.

<sup>61</sup>A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, ll. 373, 375.

<sup>62</sup>R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 345/1940, ll. 440-441.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibidem*, ll. 461-465.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibidem*, ll. 458-460.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibidem*, ll. 466-469.

borders of the Romanian state, without prior consultation with Soviet Union, a fact which caused the Kremlin to be displeased<sup>66</sup>. Romania's integration into the Berlin-Rome Axis system continued even more resolutely after the collapse of King Charles II regime and the rise to power of General Ion Antonescu, initially in association with Legionary Movement. Thus, in October 1940, the first German troops arrived on the amputated territory of the Romanian state, and on 23 November, General Antonescu officially signed in Berlin the acts of accession of Romania to the Tripartite Pact, initiated on 27 September 1940 by Germany, Italy and Japan<sup>67</sup>.

At the same time, and not coincidentally, the differences between Germany and USSR were deepening, with disagreements over the Balkans and the Black Sea, eventually proving impossible to resolve, while the British military forces were scoring their first notable victories ("Battle of England", North Africa). The transparent widening of German-Soviet differences and the improvement in Britain's military situation had the effect of strengthening Türkiye's position by diminishing potential threats to it.

Romania's effective entry into the alliance system of Germany (and Italy), states at war with Great Britain, whose non-belligerent ally Türkiye continued to be, inevitably led to a redefinition of the framework of Romanian-Turkish political-diplomatic relations.

Thus, as early as 11 September 1940, the new Romanian government took the initiative of transforming the embassies in Ankara, Athens and Belgrade, and subsequently, both Foreign Minister Mihail Sturdza, on 28 September, and Ion Antonescu, on 13 October, made categorical declarations on the denunciation of the Balkan Pact<sup>68</sup>.

On 12 September, Radu Crutzescu and Şükrü Saracoğlu discussed the issue of turning embassies into legations. According to the Romanian diplomat, the Turkish foreign minister did not hide his displeasure with the Romanian government's decision, recalling that it was the Romanian side that had insisted, at the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939, on the elevation of the legations to embassy level. Radu Crutzescu's explanations indicating the "administrative reasons" for the unilateral decision made by the Antonescu government were not satisfactory to the Turkish side<sup>69</sup>. However, on 23 September, Radu Crutzescu informed that the Turkish government had accepted the Romanian

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<sup>66</sup> Aurică Simion, *Dictatul de la Viena* [The Vienna Dictate], edited by Elisabeta Simion, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing House, 1996, pp. 359-364; on the attitude of the U.S.S.R., see *ibidem*, pp. 344-351.

<sup>67</sup> *Istoria României în date* [Romania's history in data], 3<sup>rd</sup> revised and expanded edition, editor in chief: Acad. Dinu C. Giurescu, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing House, 2010, pp. 447-449.

<sup>68</sup> *I.P.E.R.D.*, pp. 329-330.

<sup>69</sup> *A.M.F.A.R.*, fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, ll. 379-381.

proposal in this regard, requesting, however, that Suphi Tanrıöver should not lose his accreditation; this request was met by the Romanian government on 8 October<sup>70</sup>. Along the same lines of reducing the staff and expenses of Romania's diplomatic representation, Colonel Traian Teodorescu, Romania's military attaché in Ankara, was also accredited in Athens, starting 1 October 1940, by "merging" (or fusing) the two posts<sup>71</sup>. On 22 October, at the end of a government meeting, Ion Antonescu asked Mihail Sturdza to appoint Romania's minister in Ankara to represent Romanian interests in Iran as well<sup>72</sup>.

However, the new regime in Bucharest was interested in maintaining economic relations with Türkiye, and especially in preserving the freedom and safety of navigation on the Black Sea and through the Straits, which made it easier to procure any kind of goods from Türkiye. Generally, Romania imported from Türkiye cotton, wool and animal skins, as well as certain quantities of vegetables, while Türkiye imported mainly oil from Romania<sup>73</sup>. On 10 October 1940, former Romanian ambassador Radu Crutzescu was granted an audience before leaving Republic of Türkiye. The meeting with President İsmet İnönü was a long and cordial one, centred on the idea of maintaining good bilateral relations<sup>74</sup>.

In the Turkish press, things were a little different from the position of political officials. Thus, after the conclusion of the Craiova Treaty between Romania and Bulgaria, the Turkish press was propagating the idea of a new Balkan Entente, open to all states in the region; in response, the German press was invoking the idea of a new pro-Axis Balkan bloc, made up of Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria<sup>75</sup>.

The entry of German troops into Romania, as early as 10 October 1940, was viewed with concern by public opinion in Türkiye, as well as by political authorities and military commanders. An initial maximum of concern was overcome following assurances from the Romanian authorities and information received through other channels, which refuted the alarmist rumors about an imminent German military action in the Balkan Peninsula<sup>76</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 384, 388.

<sup>71</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 171/1938, l. 74.

<sup>72</sup> *Stenogramele ședințelor Consiliului de Miniștri. Guvernarea Ion Antonescu. vol. I (septembrie-decembrie 1940)* [Minutes of the meetings of the Council of Ministers. Government of Ion Antonescu. vol. I (September-December 1940)], edition of documents compiled by Marcel Dumitru Ciucă, Aurelian Teodorescu & Bogdan Florin Popovici, Bucharest, National Archives of Romania, 1997, doc. 15, p. 315.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 4, p. 88, doc. 13, p. 262, doc. 17, pp. 342-360.

<sup>74</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, l. 395.

<sup>75</sup> Ž. Avramovski, *op.cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>76</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, ll. 392-394.

Once again, the Turkish press expressed its concerns more categorically than the civilian and military authorities. In several leading periodicals, a series of unfavorable material against Romania appeared after 10 October 1940. Thus, the 17 October issue of the newspaper "Ulus" ("The State") hosted an article in which the call of German troops in Romania was characterized as "an anti-national and anti-popular gesture of the Antonescu regime"; the article was also read in summary on Radio Ankara, during a press review broadcast. Still other media outlets reported all sorts of rumors and speculations about an imminent halt of Romanian oil exports to Türkiye. The magazine "Hoca Nasredin" (i.e. *Nasredin Hodja*) described, in its 18 October issue, the Romanian state's expenses for the maintenance of the German Military Mission, which had recently arrived in the country, as exorbitant. The newspaper "Vatan" ("Fatherland") of 10 October 1940 included in its columns negative assessments not only of the new political regime in Romania and its foreign policy, but also of Romanians as a people and their role in history. The publication of this material prompted Romanian diplomatic interventions and protests<sup>77</sup>.

Quite extensive data on troop movements in Türkiye were contained in a Romanian military information bulletin issued on 21 October, which focused on the general assessment that "Türkiye continues its war preparations under the leadership, and with the help of England". Weapons and war materiel continued to arrive in Türkiye from Britain, in particular through the ports of Istanbul and Izmir, and the presence of British instructor airmen was confirmed, who also supervised the construction of six underground hangars. The number of Turkish troops under arms was estimated at around one million, with the bulk of the troops deployed, as previous information indicated, in Thrace and the region of the Straits<sup>78</sup>. The estimated figure of around one million under arms was an exaggeration, and later information led to the conclusion that Turkish troops under arms during the six years of the Second World War never exceeded 750,000<sup>79</sup>.

The beginning of the Italo-Greek war on 28 October 1940, marked a new stage in the Axis Powers' offensive in south-eastern Europe. In the context of the growing tension in relations between Italy and Greece, and the subsequent outbreak of hostilities, rumors of Türkiye's entry into the war against the Axis Powers were circulated in various circles, including the Bulgarian press. The massing of Turkish troops in Thrace was seen in some quarters as a sign of preparations for a pre-emptive attack against Bulgaria, aimed at preventing

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, ll. 398-399, 402-406.

<sup>78</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., fund *General Military Staff-Division 2 Intelligence*, dossier no. 903/1940, l. 238.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*, *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 595/1944, l. 51.



German troops from entering that country<sup>80</sup>. However, immediately after the outbreak of the Italian aggression, Türkiye and Yugoslavia (formally still allies of Greece under the Balkan Pact) declared themselves neutral, but intervened with the leaders in Sofia to ensure that Bulgaria remained neutral, too<sup>81</sup>. In a telegram sent on 30 October, Colonel Traian Teodorescu pointed out that the Ankara government was rather reserved, whereas the newspapers unanimously condemned the Italian aggression, expressing sympathy for Greece and inserting warnings against Bulgaria. Teodorescu also noted the entry into a state of alarm of Turkish military units in Thrace, as well as “an increase in war activity” consisting in the mobilization of three older contingents. According to the Romanian military attaché, Ankara was absolutely convinced that Türkiye would remain neutral if Bulgaria did the same<sup>82</sup>.

The regional containment of the Italo-Greek conflict was also desired by the Romanian government. On 28 October, Foreign Minister Mihail Sturdza had a discussion on the matter with the Bulgarian Minister in Bucharest, Stoyan Petrov Chomakov, where the Bulgarian diplomat gave assurances that his country would not enter the war, as long as Türkiye also maintained its neutrality<sup>83</sup>. Three days later, the Romanian foreign minister met Suphi Tanrıöver, who requested the lifting of the departure ban on Romanian ships bound for Istanbul, currently detained in the port of Constanța. Regarding Türkiye’s attitude, Tanrıöver said that his country would remain neutral, as long as its borders were not attacked<sup>84</sup>.

On 1 November, the President of the Republic, İsmet İnönü, made his traditional annual speech at the opening of the Parliament. Romanian diplomat E. Krupenski, who was present at the event, noted that the main passage in the speech referred to Soviet Union and the Turkish-Soviet relations, which had “returned to their friendly standard”, as the Turkish president put it. As far as the Greek-Italian conflict was concerned, the Turkish president said that the Ankara government was studying the best way to follow “together with Britain and the other allied states”<sup>85</sup>. Several Romanian military information bulletins from the first four days of November 1940 recorded the placing of units deployed in Thrace on alert and the abolition of military leave by the Turkish General Staff, the continuation of intensive work on the fortifications in Thrace, the movement of the Turkish Motorized Division towards the Greek border, new

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, dossier no. 315/1940, ll. 3-9.

<sup>81</sup> Ž. Avramovski, *op.cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>82</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., *Collection XIV*, dossier no. 315/1940, l. 13.

<sup>83</sup> C. Calafeteanu, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>84</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund 71/*Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, ll. 415-416.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*, l. 420.

mobilization operations, as well as the continuation of British deliveries of arms and ammunition, especially for the coastal artillery<sup>86</sup>.

The continuation and intensification of the Turkish-British military collaboration generated and fueled, in the circles of the Antonescian regime, certain fears of a possible complicity of Türkiye in a possible British air attack against Romania, in particular in the Ploiești oil-producing area. Such a scenario can also be found in the report of the Romanian consul in Beirut, Paul Negulescu, transmitted on 22 November 1940. Quoting a number of Turkish sources from the future capital of the independent Lebanese state, the Romanian consul considered a British air attack against Romania as probable, with the airports in western parts of Türkiye as departure bases, in case of the German troops entering the Balkans proper, i.e. South of the Danube<sup>87</sup>. A potentially reassuring piece of information in this respect was contained in a military information bulletin of 9 December 1940; according to this document, the Turkish government had rejected the British request to make San Stefano (Yeşilköy) airport available to the British. At the same time, however, the Turkish authorities had started to arm all merchant ships with one or two 75 mm cannons<sup>88</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

The finalization of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and a sequence of subsequent military and political-diplomatic developments placed both Romania and Türkiye under formidable pressure from the two totalitarian colossuses, with the most important threat coming from Soviet expansionism. The peak of this pressure was reached in mid-1940, when Romania lost one-sixth of its national territory to USSR and was forced to desperately seek Germany's goodwill, which would be eventually gained only after further territorial concessions to Hungary and Bulgaria.

However, a series of (particularly geopolitical) circumstances allowed Türkiye to maintain its privileged relationship with Great Britain in the second half of 1940, while at the same time capitalizing on certain (supposedly) diverging German-Soviet interests in South-Eastern Europe, which were to manifest themselves quite transparently by the end of that calendar year.

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<sup>86</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., fund *General Military Staff- Division 2 Intelligence*, dossier no. 903/1940, ll. 182-195.

<sup>87</sup> A.M.F.A.R., fund *71/Türkiye (1920-1944)*, vol. 61, l. 433.

<sup>88</sup> R.N.M.A.-C.A.D.P., fund *General Military Staff- Division 2 Intelligence*, dossier no. 903/1940, l. 47.

The middle of 1940 also marked a turning point in the development of relations between Romania and Türkiye, which, after the “Bessarabian crisis” of 26-27 June 1940, visibly entered a downward slope.

On 27 June 1940, Türkiye proved to be a much more loyal ally of Romania than Greece and especially Yugoslavia, declaring itself ready to fulfill its obligations under the Balkan Entente Pact, but the Ankara government and particularly the Turkish press received, with more or less disguised relief, the final decision of the Romanian authorities to withdraw the army and administration from the territories claimed by USSR. After this moment, the Romanian-Turkish alliance ceased *de facto*, and was *de jure* denounced three months later.

Generally, the Romanian military and diplomatic sources have correctly captured the tendency of the Turkish authorities to maintain, as long as possible, an attitude of non-belligerence, which was combined with a firm will not to admit any violation of the country’s borders and a concern not to violate (at least flagrantly) any commitment undertaken.

The bilateral economic ties and interests have substantially contributed to the maintaining of a certain level of friendship and cordiality in the Romanian-Turkish political-diplomatic relations, in the rather unfavorable circumstances subsequent to the break-up of the Balkan Entente.

The Turkish press, partly free and quite diverse, expressed, often in a rather categorical tone, and sometimes with anticipation, the point of view of the authoritarian post-Kemalist monoparty authoritarian regime. Thus, the break-up of the Romanian-Turkish alliance was felt earlier and more stridently in the pages of some important Turkish newspapers than in the official statements made by the government and other responsible factors in Ankara.