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Romanian-Italian Relations

1948-1965

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Key words: Foreign politics, determining factors, diplomacy, bilateral relations, Communism, Italian Communist Party, Securitate.

The present thesis addresses the Romanian-Italian bilateral relations from the perspective of a bipolar system existing during the Cold War. Its target is to reconstruct chronologically and to integrate systematically the relations between the two marginal countries within the international relations after the Second World War.

The argumentative discourse relies on three pillars: the institutions of the state (bureaucracy), the relations between the two Communist parties and eventually, the role of the secret services in shaping and implementing decisions in foreign politics. Essentially, the initial idea of this thesis was to follow functioning mechanisms of the permanent transfer of authority between the bureaucracy structures of the state, Foreign Ministry party structures and Securitate. The analysis of the party documents, of those produced by the state or Securitate, displays that the authority transfer was not unilateral, from state institutions to Securitate. To a certain extent, the authority source returned to the government bureaucracy institutions. The new structure of the Foreign Ministry professionalized until the end of the 50s. This may be observed within the diplomatic representations: the different rapport to the authorities of the hosting country, a totally ideologized discourse and certainly, the negotiations between the two poles of power existing in the host country.

The impetus of such a research came from a visible lack of research interest in this field: scholars approached the foreign politics of Romania during the first years of the Cold War only rarely. Considering this historiography hiatus, the present thesis aims to fill a gap.

The structure of this thesis relies on the research target, and namely to disentangle the modalities of taking and implementing foreign politics decisions in Romania. The famous analysis of Hanna Arendt with respect to totalitarianism represented a model for my research. Considering her assertions on how the authority is assigned within the institutions of the state and those exceeding the limits of the state (such as the party), I structured my research in accordance with the three apparent or real poles of power: the institutions of the state, party, Securitate. All in all, „foreign politics” designates in this case, the activity by means of which the state actors come into action, react and interact within and between each others.

Outgoing point for my research was the permanent transfer of authority between the three structures as well as the more or less powerful competition between the structures of the state, party and security with respect to information access – this one has been seen as an instrument of authority source. This beginning idea was widely presented in the first chapter, which focuses on the „deconstruction” of the democrat popular state of Romania. The approach is more from a scientific legal point of view, but the analysis of the decision taking mechanisms rely on unpublished or published archive sources.

The second chapter analyses the evolution of the relations between the two states in the period 1948-1965. The first part of this chapter addresses the Romanian and Italian foreign politics. My analyses mainly detects the interconnection between the factors which build the foreign politics and those which implement it. Thus, this first part analyses the relations and connections between the primary factors of the foreign politics and namely the diplomatic delegations and Romanian Foreign Ministry, respectively Italy. Starting from the analysis of the diplomatic language, I aimed to detect the diplomatic practices and institutional relations existing in these two countries. The analysis of the idiosyncrasy is important in as much as the international relations were part of it. The list of the mandated people in the diplomatic legations and their biographies may provide important data on the importance given to the Romanian-Italian bilateral relations, and more precisely on the foreign politics strategy.

This chapter represents the most significant part of the entire thesis. Although the model of analysis is quite classical, as it addresses the political, cultural and economic relations, the approach is chronological only to a small extent. The analysis of the „hot” diplomatic issues is supposed to provide a more comprehensive view on the arguments. My initial assumption was that the relations between the two states were to a high degree shaped by the successive periods of conflict, partial detent and cooperation. Initially we may observe a conflict, between the timeframe 1948-1955 (represented by certain diplomatic practices, almost crossing the limits of the international law and normal practices). The second period represented the detent, the years 1955-1962, and eventually cooperation, 1962-1965. The latter did not embody only economic exchanges, fundamental diplomatic practices, relying more or less on „good faith”, in as much as it may come into discussion in the case of the democratic popular state. Each period featured its specific problems. The period of conflict

featured the requisitions and nationalization of Italians assets in Romania, Italian state seizure on a package of shares belonging to the Romanian state, espionage trials instrumented by the authorities of the two states, denunciation of the cultural agreement, which brought about a lockout of the Italian Cultural Institute in Bucharest and Accademia di Romania in Rome. Moreover the Italian diplomats in Bucharest openly expressed their anti-Communist views, meanwhile the Romanian diplomats induced an aggressive propaganda in Rome.

The second period 1955-1962 represented a real reestablishment of the economic exchanges between the two countries. On the one hand, this process may be perceived as a consequence of the diplomatic detent, when some Italian citizens were released from the Romanian jails and expelled to Italy. On the other hand, this evolution may be understood as an outcome of the economic changes and necessities and new challenges, which determined a transformation of the political approaches. The duo between politics and economy is very complex, as the interconnections between the two of them were highly tied.

The economic interests coagulated within the frame of some groups of interests are capable of determining governmental politics. Romania, similarly to the other popular-democratic countries, represented a good market for the Westetn (Italian) business people, especially in textiles, but also a very important source of natural resources, such as the oil. To some extent, the anti-Communist discourse of some social democrats was not any more significantly decisive in political decisions. The splits among the social Christians as well as the economic boom coupled with the dissolution of the Communist danger allowed a less ideological, but rather pragmatic approach. As considering Romania, this change was caused by a more pragmatic approach towards the West (needs of economic exchanges in order to reach the industrialization) and ideological transformations (especially after the burst of a conflict among the Communist countries).

The last period featured the cooperation, starting with the years 1961/1962. This relied to a high degree on the reestablishment of connections based on ethic issues. The well accomplishment of the charges taken over by a state is a principle of the international law. The rules which establish the prerogatives of a diplomatic agency are the international law customs and they are almost unanimity recognized. The observance of these practices on the part of the Romanian authorities may be noticed in the archive documents. It may rely on the previous transgressions on the

Romanian side, which could not be imputed through coercion. This was also due to a similar treatment of the Romanian diplomats in Italy, as well as practices which affected the interests of Romania in Italy.

Besides, certain issues which were specific to each period were common issues, of the Italians living in Romania or Romanians living in Italy. The strategy of the two countries modified in accordance with the internal political exigencies. With respect to the Italian citizens living in Romania, one may have in view several stages. Initially there was an exodus, followed by a period when legal repatriation was not possible (1951-1955). The following period featured mutual repatriations, as a consequence of manifold protests raised by the Italian diplomats in Bucharest. Starting with 1957-1958, the Romanian authorities coerced Italian citizens in order to persuade them to renounce the Italian citizenship.

When addressing Romanian-Italian relations in this period, one may not disregard the exiled Romanians living in Italy and their role into implementing certain foreign political affairs. The Romanians living in exile strove to obtain international recognition and support, be it from the part of the local governments, inter-government or non-government organizations and public opinion. During the first period of the Cold War, Italian authorities supported (although only to a small extent) the refugees from Eastern Europe due to the growing anxiety concerning the extension of the Communist danger. As Romanians had no well structured exile between the years 1948-1953, only personal initiatives could be supported. Nonetheless, the subsequent cooperation between Italy and Eastern Europe (including Romania) decreased the support accorded by Italy to the exiled Romanians living in Italy.

In the third chapter I analyzed the relations between the Italian Communist Party and Romanian Communist Party during the 50s. In this period we have no meetings between the leaders of the two parties, except for the congresses and encounters within the official frame of the Cominform. This may be explained by the strict ideological monopoly specific to those years. The encounters for the negotiation of a common position or display of own visions happened later as the ideological monopoly lost on power. Started with the 60s these encounters became quite often, the position of the Romanian Communists stirring interest on the *Via delle Botteghe Oscure*. It is interesting that there was born the myth of the mediator between SSUR and China around both Communist leaders.

The last chapter represents a case study and focuses on the informative pursuit of Italian diplomats in Bucharest as well as relations between Securitate and Italian minority in Romania. I mainly insisted on the role played by a less notorious personality, Ugo Merola. This case study will support my thesis, that of a competition for resources and information, between the structures of the state, and namely party and Securitate.

Such a new approach enabled me to build my arguments by mainly relying on archive documents. I researched in several archives, The Central National Historical Archive of Romania (for instances the fonds CC of the RCP PCR-Foreign Affairs, CC of PCR-Chancellery, CC of PCR-Propaganda and agitation, CC of PCR-Clerks), The Diplomatic Archiv of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, CNSAS, The diplomatic Historical Archive of Italy, and States Archive of Rome. I consulted newspapers from the two countries, such as *L'Unita*, *Scînteia*, *Pentru pace trainică, pentru democrație populară*) and a wide Romanian, Italian literature on this topic.

On the course of this research there were many other issues which I came across, nonetheless not approached in this thesis, due to my wish of being more efficient. One of this was the relation between the Romanian Communist Party and the Italian one in the context of the Soviet-Chinese crisis. Another approach would be the oral history, and more specifically some interviews with prominent members of the Italian community in Romania such as Giancarlo Merola.