

„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

FACULTY OF HISTORY

## Romanian-Greek Relations

(1945-1965)

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IASI

2022

The relations between Romania and Greece in the first two decades after the war are part of the classical logic of the foreign policy of the two states in the period 1945-1965. Thereby, Romania's foreign policy followed the coordinates drawn by Moscow, and Greece turned its attention to strengthening foreign relations with Western states, showing reluctance towards the socialist camp. However, the evolution of international relations in the two post-war decades and the economic needs of the two states made it possible to restore Romanian-Greek diplomatic relations.

Structured in two parts, the paper brings to the reader's attention an image of Romania's foreign policy, by highlighting its relationship with Greece in a bitter period in the history of the two states. In the first part, which consists of four chapters, we present an aspect of the connections between the two states, in the context of the political and social changes that took place after the end of the Second World War.

At the end of the Second World War we are witnessing the expansion of the communist ideology, the countries of Eastern Europe being the main actors who have voluntarily appropriated or to whom this path has been imposed. Among them was Romania. The Greek Civil War was the first armed manifestation of the Cold War, as well as the first official recognition of spheres of influence. Greece was in the western camp, whose members had to act to maintain its status as a free country. The United Kingdom was significantly involved in the events of the Greek Civil War, with the destabilization of the internal situation, the maintenance of the traditional trajectory of Greek politics and the strengthening of the presence in the region. In this context, the direct involvement of the British government in the process of establishing the regency could be noticed, but also in the elections of March 1946.

On the other hand, by contributing substantially to the liberation of Greek territory from Nazi occupation, members and supporters of the Greek Communist Party / PCG, allied around the National Liberation Front / EAM, wanted to seize power and form a new government. Given that this was not possible peacefully, the Greek Communists incited the population to strike, which led to the destabilization of Greece's domestic policy and the transformation of the misunderstandings into a fratricidal war. While the "monarchist" government sought help from Western powers, the Greek Communist Party appealed to the USSR and other socialist countries. Although Stalin initially seemed to offer hope to the Greek Communists through meetings with

their leaders, at the end of the Greek Civil War, the Soviet leader was seen as the one who abandoned them. However, Stalin instructed the USSR satellite states to support the Greek Communists in their struggle, including by accepting refugees. The PCG received military support from Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, and later from other socialist or popular republics in Eastern Europe.

Romania, which remained in the sphere of Soviet influence and was ruled by communist forces backed by Moscow, also stood out through its connections with Greek communist leaders, materialized by the organization of the PCG headquarters in Bucharest and the reception of Greek refugees (children and partisans). In fact, the Romanian authorities collaborated with the other Eastern European states and sent aid to the Greek partisans (food, medicine, ammunition, etc.).

Greek refugees from Romania have become an important part of the Greek minority in our country. They arrived in three rounds: the first were the children, the second "wave" was represented by the wounded, and at the end came the partisans and the elderly. The refugees benefited from the support of the Romanian authorities, financially and socially and politically, although Romania could barely cope with the internal economic and social difficulties. But the fact that he receives "heroes", who fought with the gun in hand for years in a row against the "monarch-fascists" in Greece and the "Anglo-American imperialism" contributed to the legitimation of our countries and the consolidation and appreciation of Romania's profile.

The legal status of the Greeks in Romania was uncertain. This uncertainty was caused by the fact that Romania could not participate in the Geneva Convention because it was not part of the UN. The Greeks were in our country to recover from a hard war, so that later some would return to Greece, some to continue their dream of building a people's democracy, and others to reunite with their families.

Between 1948 and 1949, Romania received about 1.200 sick and elderly Greek partisans people. They were admitted to Elias and Central Hospitals in Bucharest, as well as to the casino in Sinaia, which was also organized as a hospital. Severely ill partisans with problems such as tuberculosis were treated at the TB sanatoriums in Greci, Slatina, Geoagiu Hunedoara, Balotești Snagov, Dărmănești Bacău, Iași Valey Argeș and Tătărai Prahova. In April 1949, about 800

Greeks who passed through hospitals in Romania and other states returned to Greece to take part in the last battles of the Civil War.

The Greeks who remained in Romania were involved, like the other citizens, in the reconstruction process initiated after the end of the war. In order to integrate them into the labor force, the refugees were involved in the process of industrialization and collectivization of agriculture, being assigned / distributed jobs in factories and farms, some specially designed for them, such as those from Stefanesti -Florica, Argeş County, but also in the factories where most of the workers were Romanian. Subsequently, a large part of them were included in the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR), continuing their activities in the factories in which they were seconded.

The issue of the Greek children in refugee remains one of the most impressive events of the Greek Civil War. Although the sending of Greek children by partisans to the communist states was an event made public, the Greek authorities did not have the opportunity to prevent such actions. Most of the time, the children were taken with the consent of the parents and those over the age of 12 could often decide for themselves whether to leave or not, regardless of the decision of the parents or guardians. Thus, over 18.000 children between the ages of 3 and 14 years from conflict zones were sent by Greek communists to Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, but also to neighboring Greece.

Romania, like all the satellite states of the USSR, received with open arms the Greek refugee children who were organized in colonies located in resorts and locations where there were free buildings, such as: Tulgheş, Călimăneşti, Oradea, Arad, Blaj, Sinaia, Roman, Orăştie, Vaţa de Jos, Florica (domain of the Brătianu family), Cluj, Sinaia and Pâclişa. As the host country of the PCG, Romania received the largest number of Greek children, some of whom arrived even after the end of the Civil War in other Eastern European states, such as Yugoslavia, Albania or Czechoslovakia. In 1950, according to the statements made by the leaders of the Greek Communist Party, there were 5.188 more children in Romania, both in the colonies and in vocational schools. In an attempt to train these children in the model of the socialist “new man”, the Romanian authorities mobilized numerous human and financial resources to ensure them a decent living, far above that of Romanian children and the necessary education, especially since

the most of them were from "healthy background" families who fought voluntarily for the socialist cause.

Like the rest of Romania's population, members of the Greek historical community were hostile to the communist authorities who took power in Romania, but also to the Greek communist leaders, EAM members, who took steps to take over the leadership of the Greek community in Romania. In 1947, the General Secretary of the Greek Communist Party, Manoleli, called on the EAM Committee to involve the EMA's members in the "enlightenment" of the Greek population in Romania in order to recruit new members.

The success of the Greek communists in taking over the leadership of the Greek communities in Romania and transforming them into "democratic" political / mass organizations must be interpreted in the context of Romania's change into a "people's democracy". During the research we found that the Greek communists took over the leadership of the Greek community without the help of the Romanian Workers' Party.

In terms of structure, the Hellenic Union of Romania followed the same organizing principles as the parties in the Soviet bloc countries. It consisted of a Central Committee which appointed the Secretariat and the Political Bureau. At the same time, according to the existing notes and reports in the funds consulted, the Union received instructions directly from the Central Committee / CC of the PMR. As in the case of the RPR mass organizations, the Hellenic Union of Romania dealt with both political issues and the organization of social and cultural events within the organization, although participation in them was low. In this context, the Hellenic Democratic Union was the main "body" of control of the population of Greek origin in Romania in the postwar years.

The second part of the paper deals with the relations between the two states in the period 1957-1965, following the resumption of the official Romanian-Greek contacts and addresses, in part, every aspect of diplomatic relations: political, cultural, economic, etc.

The post-war international context meant that from 1948 to the mid-1950s the Bucharest regime had as its main objective the consolidation of power at the national level, the elements of foreign policy being somewhat marginalized, but keeping "holy" the coordinates of Moscow in its relations with others. state. Beginning in the second half of the sixth decade, "encouraged" by

the dissent between the Kremlin and Beijing and Khrushchev's secret relationship, Romania began "shyly" to open up to Western states. In this context of expansion, but also due to technological and economic needs, Romania has outlined a new foreign policy strategy.

On the other hand, Greece, socially and economically "exhausted" by the civil war, sought to make its way into the Western camp as follows: it received economic aid through the Marshall Plan, joined the North Atlantic Alliance in 1952, and became an associate member of the European Council in 1961. These events were reinforced by the actions of the government in Athens to limit as much as possible the demonstrations organized by the communist states, considered a threat to seize power through socialist propaganda and the return of Greek communist refugees.

In the context of the removal of the Romanian authorities from the Kremlin's policy and economic needs, the approach to Greece was achieved, which thus became one of the first states outside the socialist camp with which Romania resumed diplomatic relations. The first connections with Greece were made in the economic field, the interest for economic exchanges coming simultaneously from both states. The signing in 1954 of an economic agreement between the two states and the upward course of trade in Athens the resumption of diplomatic relations at embassy level

Because Greece was a state outside the Soviet zone, but still without a special political status in the West, in the sense that it was economically dependent on the Great Powers, the Bucharest executive, emphasizing good historical and neighborhood relations, had the "courage" to take this initiative from the first signs of relaxation. The Greek authorities accepted, however, conditional, like other Western states (eg. France, Belgium), the resumption of diplomatic relations by granting war reparations to Greek refugees leaving Romania.

After the exchange of diplomatic ties, the Romanian ambassador undertook steps to get to know the diplomatic environment in the area, the relevant authorities and personalities, with a view to developing relations between the two states. The first visits were made to the Soviet embassy and other legations of the communist states. The purpose of these visits was to take the "pulse" of space and coordinate in order to maintain a common line within the group of states of "popular democracy". Contacts have also been initiated with various political and cultural figures

in Greece and concrete action plans have been drawn up in various fields. The activity of the Greek embassy in Bucharest in the first years after the resumption of diplomatic relations was not highlighted by the diversity of activities, the main interests being the consular ones, which were characterized mainly by the intervention of the Romanian authorities to grant visas to Greek citizens or ethnic groups. The Greek embassy also did not comment on the initiation of collaborations in various fields or the realization of joint projects.

Romania's actions in terms of information and press relations have been successful in Greece. If at the beginning of the resumption of diplomatic relations the Greek press had more negative opinions about the Romanian state and its actions domestically and internationally, in less than a year the number of positive articles about Romania increased significantly to the detriment of the negative ones. Instead, the image of Greece in the Romanian press was mentioned sporadically, in the context of international events that directly or indirectly involved the Greek state.

The process of developing relations between the two states in the political, cultural, etc. field was much slower than that of developing economic relations, which was caused by Greece's "phobia" of any action by the communist states. A representative issue in this regard was the cultural issue. Important for the Romanian side, the cultural actions undertaken by Romanian diplomats in Greece were sabotaged by the Greek authorities, and the elaboration of a concrete action plan between the two states was postponed for several years. As other Western states, such as France, agreed to sign a pre-established cultural exchange plan with Romania, the cause of the Greek categorical refusal in this field was, in addition to the "danger of communist propaganda", the Aromanian issue.

Even without a pre-established plan, the cultural dimension of diplomatic relations has been reached by the two states. Collaborations took place in various fields such as: science through magazine exchanges and participation in conferences, art through exhibitions, sports through the organization of sports competitions between teams from the two states but also through participation in the Balkans, which, during the period analyzed by us, took place in Athens and Bucharest.

The Aromanians were a "taboo" subject in their relationship with Greece. Although they received acceptable treatment in the interwar period, the Romanian state was allowed to offer help to the Aromanians in Greece, to organize schools and churches in Romanian for them, at the end of the Second World War the actions were resumed against this minority, which has remained unrecognized as such to this day. Schools and churches were closed and the Aromanian population persecuted. The Romanian side tried to discuss this issue with the Greek authorities, including the opening of a Consulate in Thessaloniki, in order to provide assistance and organize this minority, but the Greeks refused any action in this regard. Moreover, in 1963, they conditioned any bilateral action, including political, economic and cultural, on a public statement by the Bucharest government to assume that it was not interested in the Aromanians in Greece.

Economic relations between Romania and Greece were the main "engine" of the development of diplomatic relations between the two states. Although with an economic balance in favor of Romania, both states enjoyed the advantages of trade. From 70,700,000 lei in foreign currency, in 1964 which represented 0.54% of the total foreign trade of Romania, in 1970 it reached 213,300,000 lei in foreign currency (export 172,000,000 lei and import 40,300,000 lei), representing 0, 93% of Romania's total trade in that period of time.

The negotiations within the Joint Commission for the Evaluation of the Claims of Greek Refugees in Romania regarding the compensations for the nationalized buildings abandoned by the Greek owners upon their repatriation, actions within some factories, bank accounts, etc., had a more difficult course. According to the provisions of the Agreement on the resumption of diplomatic relations, the Commission was to complete its work within a maximum of five months. As no agreement was reached in this regard, the work of the Joint Commission was extended several times and was completed after six years. Discussions on this issue were more difficult as the nature of the Greek claims was different from that of other states - large number of claims (approx. 3000) and numerous goods.

The foreign policy of the two countries, including diplomatic relations, was marked by their ideology and membership in various international communities: Romania, the USSR satellite state, a member of the Warsaw Pact and CAER, and Greece, a NATO member, later allied with The European. community. Neither of them acted independently, both being



influenced by ideologically and / or economically dependent states. It should be noted, however, that Romania's opening to Greece was a strictly bilateral issue, coordinated by national interests, Bucharest not being a vector for the interests of the USSR in the area.

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