

## Romanian-Bulgarian political-diplomatic relations<sup>1</sup>

A research on the Romanian-Bulgarian relations, in general, on the political and diplomatic ones, in particular, was necessary because this subject was not a goal until this moment in the Romanian historiography; and in the Bulgarian one, very mobilized, they have operated in a hostile, nationalist, revisionist, thus unscientific manner, for over nine decades. The authoress motivates both situations in the Introduction to the 12 chapters of the book, chapters followed by Conclusions and Bibliography.

The lack of such research on behalf of the Romanian historians, as a result of some known political and ideological reasons, made the authoress get the data, the information and the assessments from studies and monographic works with different topics, these being to the point to greater or lesser extent. But Dr. Maria Costea's work substance had to be and is represented by the archival documents, researched upon in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, by the published documents, excerpts from the Romanian, Bulgarian, British, French, Italian and German archives. It is necessary to mention the absurd restrictions imposed by the Bulgarian authorities on the research in their archives.

Dr. Maria Costea investigates and analyses the current state of the research on the Romanian-Bulgarian relations issues between 1938 and 1940, the local contributions being relatively numerous through the published documents, the special studies, the memoirs of some contemporaries or actors of the events that took place in the studied period of time.

I think it is really professional the book's foray into the Bulgarian historiography, distorted by the revisionist obsessions, the basic component of the Bulgarian foreign policy after 1913. The Bulgarian policy was supported by the dictatorships and by the Western democracies, through the yielding and conciliation gestures, ultimately by abandoning the alliances and the territorial status quo.

The Bulgarian scientists' works, specifically on the Bulgarian-Romanian relations are well reviewed in this book. Despite all the evidence, primarily the content of the archive, they were placed on the path of the absurd revisionist theses. Typical examples: Antonina Kuzmanova, Ilcio Dimitrov, Dimitar Sirkov, Nicolai

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<sup>1</sup> Costea Maria, *Relațiile politico-diplomatice româno-bulgare (1938-1940)* [Romanian-Bulgarian political-diplomatic relations (1938-1940)], Cluj-Napoca, Editura „Napoca Star”, 2010, 475 pages, ISBN 978-973-647-756-0

Ghencev. Their opinions and interpretations are subjected to Dr. Maria Costea's meritorious and necessary critical analysis. I agree with the conclusion of our authoress: „You cannot find 'absolute truths' in the statements of some historians no matter how famous they are, if you are not able to check their sources, to have access to their archival sources...”

Although the first chapter is entitled „Overview of the Romanian-Bulgarian relations on the eve of the Second World War”, the reader has to go over 50 pages in which we are given no less than 12 sub-themes, issues or events starting from the origin of the dispute between Bucharest and Sofia, from the two Balkan Wars and the entry into the Romanian Space of the Southern Dobrudja and ending with the events that were consumed in 1940, in a tragic atmosphere for the peoples of Europe. This issue, researched and analysed here, is important and complex, anchored in the political and diplomatic relations, but including a variety of issues on minorities, schools for them, places of worship, social and financial issues, communications, legal, property, terrorism, and subversive anti-Romanian actions. All these issues (some presented in with an avalanche of details) have their significance.

The successful offensive of the totalitarian states in their endeavour to liquidate the international order created after World War I encouraged and stimulated the revisionist neighbours of Romania, despite the efforts of Bucharest to keep or maintain normal relations with them, but without mentioning the frontiers of the country. The Anschluss (1938), for example, led to the increase of the Nazi influence in Hungary and Bulgaria, which determined the Romanian diplomacy to attempt the achievement of rapprochement of the states in South-eastern Europe, the idea of building a “Block of the neutrals” or a Balkan Block, the initiatives remaining without consequences. Also, in the book there is a sketch of the political-diplomatic frame in which the agreement was reached between the Balkan Entente and Bulgaria, on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1938 in Thessaloniki. This Agreement aims to build a nonaggression pact between the five Balkan states and to quit the military clauses of the Treaties of Neuilly and Lausanne, which did not mean that Bulgaria will join the Balkan Pact or give up its territorial claims.

The dissolution and liquidation of the Czechoslovak State then led to an increasing aggression of the revisionists against Romania, a situation to which the British attitude to encourage the Bulgarian claims on Southern Dobrudja contributed to a great extent. Among other things, this led Sofia to try to break the solidarity of the Balkan Entente, to isolate Romania and Greece and to create a Belgrade-Sofia-Ankara Axis, as it is revealed in the book.

The authoress portrays the atmosphere and the conditions that were reached at the signing of the Romanian-German Economic Treaty on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1939, the spectre of an armed attack from Hungary, Bulgaria's increased pressures and the more and more obvious fact that between Sofia and Berlin the relations were better and better.

Interesting is the analysis to which the weaving interests are subjected, the pressures and steps around the Anglo-French guarantees to Greece, Poland and Romania, worthless guarantees regarding maintaining the integrity of the Romanian state. Somewhat concerned about setting a Block of Southeast Europe, away from the German control, London asked the Romanian authorities to give in to Bulgaria's pressures, with the illusory hope that it could be convinced to join the Balkan Entente. Belgrade, Ankara and Washington acted likewise. They went so far as on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1939, the Romanian Government approved the project proposed by Turkey regarding the acceptance of Bulgaria in the Balkan Entente. On 24<sup>th</sup> April 1939, Armand Calinescu presented to King Carol II the plan to achieve an agreement with Bulgaria, in case Yugoslavia withdrew from the Balkan Entente. The British asked Gafencu, who was in London between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April 1939, that Romania made territorial sacrifices, which obviously was not accepted.

Meanwhile, Sofia and Berlin grew even closer, as well as Sofia and Rome, a situation that helped increase the Bulgarian revisionist propaganda abroad against Romania, issues to which the authoress reserves an analysis and an appropriate space.

The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1939 improves dramatically the relations between Bulgaria and the USSR, Stalin encouraging the Bulgarian claims on its neighbours. Dr. Maria Costea well reviews the main aspects of the metamorphoses that occurred in the summer and autumn of 1939 in this part of Europe. Among other things, the book outlines the political and diplomatic alternation of Sofia, on the one hand the satisfaction that the Soviets would assist it in achieving its goals, on the other hand the prudence for fear of a too strong influence which Stalin would acquire on the Bulgarian Kingdom .

Based on the findings of the previous research published over time, the authoress analyses Romania's neutrality, focusing on the main actions taken by the Romanian Government to keep the country out of the conflict, including meetings and talks with the Turkish officials, approaching the German authorities. The book studies in parallel with the policy performed by the neutral Bulgaria, which persevered in its territorial claims on Romania, considering and relying on the threat made by the USSR and Hungary against Romania. Moreover, the authoress treats independently the Bulgarian leaders' behaviour in case of an armed conflict between the Soviets and the Romanians, and their attitude towards the Mutual Assistance Pact between Britain, France and Turkey. Incidentally, few data are discussed concerning the trade between Romania and Bulgaria, Romania and Germany and Bulgaria and Germany.

Romania continued to press for the establishment of a Balkan Block or a Block of the neutral, its efforts being meant to attract Bulgaria in these groups, efforts that failed, although, as well shown in the book, the Romanian diplomacy went as far as accepting some compromises with the Bulgarians and even deviating from the principle of intangibility of the borders. Bulgaria could not be persuaded to

assume the obligation to respect the status quo in the Balkans during the war, despite the kind gestures from the Yugoslav, Turkish and British diplomacies, in fact yielding gestures, encouraging the Bulgarian revisionist political circles. Bulgaria triggered a broad political and diplomatic action for the „return of South Dobrudja” peacefully, mobilising sympathies in Rome, Berlin and Moscow, but unfortunately also in London and Paris.

Germany's military successes paved Bulgaria's way towards the Axis, but without provoking the USSR.

Dr. Maria Costea analyses to an appreciable extent the practical consequences of yielding the territory claimed by the Bulgarians on Romania, the process and the precedent being inaugurated by Moscow's ultimatum notes on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June 1940. It was a Soviet-German competition to give satisfaction to Bulgaria, the statements to this effect becoming more and more common in the summer of 1940, which would be done also by Hungary. What were the consequences? The consequences were the pro-German orientation of Carol, too late for Berlin, the threats from the East and from the West, the Berlin's urge that the King began the negotiations with Hungary and Bulgaria, which the monarch, lost in politics and diplomacy, executed, because - he had been warned by Hitler – everything would lead to „the destruction of Romania”.

To put the opponents in agreement, Hitler summoned them in July 1940 to talks in one of his residences in Germany. During the discussions with Gigurtu and Manoilescu, Hitler said that only after Romania had yielded some territories and reached an agreement with Bulgaria and Hungary, would Germany give it security guarantees. We agree with the authoress's assessment that the documents of the meeting with Hitler prove the incompetence and cowardice of the governors in Bucharest, owned by Carol, who succumbed before negotiating.

Giving the Bulgarian diplomats assurances in the talks on 27<sup>th</sup> July, that their demands would be met, Hitler delivered an ultimatum on 31<sup>st</sup> July that Romania should yield the Southern Dobrudja, solution which „must be simply accepted „. Germany's pressures increased, so Romania's Memorandum addressed to the Axis to support its rights over South Dobrudja, on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1940, had no effect, according to the book.

From that date, no step or action of Carol's government had any significance or influence in the course of events that were dictated from the outside. The lack of official documentation regarding these actions and steps is enlightening.

The situation was different regarding the preliminaries to the Romanian-Bulgarian Conference in Craiova, within the negotiations between 19<sup>th</sup> August-7<sup>th</sup> September 1940, the archival documents being numerous, many of them unpublished, reporting on the form of the Treaty, the territorial issues, the exchange of populations, damages, evictions etc. All these aspects are subjected to a serious and relevant analysis, the authoress finding, in the position of the Romanian delegation, led by Al. Cretzianu, sufficient dignified gestures and attitudes in

relation to the Bulgarian exaggerated requests and opinions, under the impact of the Vienna Dictate.

The authoress subjects the content of the Treaty of Craiova to a careful and meticulous analysis, treaty which was signed on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1940, ratified on 10<sup>th</sup> September, the exchange of the instruments of notification taking place on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1940.

If the Romanian authorities complied with the Treaty, the Bulgarian caused nervous moments about the evacuation of the Bulgarians in North Dobrudja, by contesting the lists drawn up by the Romanian officials, by not paying the debt assumed by Sofia, concerning the balance of the crops and others.

The main conclusion of Dr. Maria Costea's book is that the Romanian-Bulgarian political and diplomatic relations in the period 1938 - 1940 were marked, if not altered, by the revisionism of Bulgaria, particularly by its territorial claims targeting Southern Dobrudja and the issue of the minorities. This revisionist policy found encouragement, understanding and support from both the totalitarian and revisionist states and the Western democracies. In other words, Romania's territorial losses were „the result of the Soviet-German agreement of August 1939, manifested in the context of the Franco-British appeasement policy for decades”.

The book, originally the PhD thesis conducted by Maria Costea, is a scientific research of definite value, it fulfils a real need in the Romanian historiography, it is well supported from the documentary point of view, it highlights the findings of some Romanian predecessors, it answers convincingly the untruths and invectives that the Bulgarian historiography launched, it uses archival documents and published documents to an appreciable extent, from Bulgaria and other countries, it is written correctly, it meets the criteria and requirements of a serious scientific enterprise.

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