

JUAN PEDRO DE ALADRO, THE FIRST CHIEF OF THE SPANISH LEGATION IN BUCHAREST

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Abstract: *Juan Pedro de Aladro was the first diplomatic representative of Spain in the Kingdom of Romania. He was appointed in 1881, following the establishment of the Spanish Legation in Bucharest, as chargé d'affaires, and in 1883 as resident minister. He was a bright and adaptable diplomat who easily blended into both the diplomatic atmosphere in which he worked and the upper echelons of Romanian society. He gained an excellent understanding of the realities of Romania and the broader Southeastern European region. Aladro was a steadfast advocate of the new Romanian state and of improving relations between Romania and Spain. The correspondence he transmitted to the Ministry of State in Madrid was written in a general manner, depicting the political situation in the country to which he was accredited in a shallow manner. By presenting the key coordinates of Romania's internal and foreign policy, as well as the challenges faced by the newly formed state in Southeastern Europe, the Spanish envoy succeeded in providing adequate diplomatic coverage for Romania in his country, thereby contributing to a clearer understanding of the situation of the Kingdom of Romania by the other states. This research is based on archival documents, memoir testimonies, and information from the Romanian state's official publication, the „Official Gazette of Romania”.*

Keywords: *Juan Pedro de Aladro, Legation of Bucharest, Romania, diplomatic relations, diplomatic correspondence.*

Rezumat: *Juan Pedro de Aladro, primul șef al Legației Spaniei la București. Juan Pedro de Aladro a fost primul reprezentant diplomatic al Spaniei în Regatul României. Acesta*

a fost numit însărcinat cu afaceri în 1881, iar în 1883, ministru rezident. Diplomat inteligent și versatil, s-a integrat cu ușurință în mediul diplomatic și în societatea înaltă din capitala României. A dobândit o bună cunoaștere a realităților românești și sud-est europene. Aladro a fost un susținător ferm al intereselor tânărului stat român și al întăririi relațiilor dintre România și Spania. Corespondența sa diplomatică relevă aceste preocupări, chiar dacă telegramele și notele trimise de el către Ministerul de Stat de la Madrid se referă mai degrabă într-o manieră generală la situația politică din țara în care a fost acreditat. Prezentând coordonatele majore ale politicii interne și externe românești, dar și problemele cu care se confrunta tânărul stat din sud-estul Europei, trimisul Spaniei a reușit să asigure României o eficace acoperire diplomatică în țara sa, contribuind la crearea unei imagini mai clare despre situația Regatului României. Cercetarea de față se sprijină pe documente de arhivă, mărturii memorialistice și informațiile din publicația oficială a statului român, „Monitorul Oficial al României”.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to present the activity of the first diplomatic representative of Spain in Romania, Juan Pedro de Aladro. This article aims to highlight the background in which the authorities in Madrid established a permanent diplomatic mission in Bucharest at legation level, following Romania's attainment of state independence in 1878 and its elevation to the status of a Kingdom in 1881. The primary focus of this research is the establishment of the Spanish legation in Romania, the appointment of the first head of the diplomatic mission in Bucharest, and an overview of his activities. From a methodological perspective, we will associate the method of historical biography with institutional history and diplomatic history. The current research is based on archival materials, including information from the official publication of the Romanian state, the “Official Gazette of Romania” („Monitorul Oficial al României”), as well as some memoirs.

The documents examined are found in various collections of the Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest and the Central National Historical Archives of Romania¹. By studying and highlighting the unpublished

¹ Among the unpublished sources are those from the Colecția *Microfilme Spania* (Spain Microfilm Collection) at the Central Archives of Romania, which include xerox copies of diplomatic documents held at the Archivo General del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores in Madrid, Fund *Correspondencia Embajadas y Legaciones. Rumanía*. Andreea Mira's article *El Fondo documental de la Legación de España en Bucarest (1880-1926): lazo histórico permanente entre Rumanía y España* („Revista Arhivelor”, vol. LXXXIX, no. 2,

information in these documents, we can enhance our understanding of bilateral diplomatic relations up to World War I. Historians from Romania and Spain have addressed this topic infrequently, and it remains insufficiently known, even among specialists in international relations or diplomatic history. The use of archival materials not only helps present Aladro's activity in Bucharest but also enriches knowledge of certain institutional aspects (the initiation, dynamics, and challenges of the Spanish diplomatic mission in Bucharest from its inception).

Information from the "Official Gazette of Romania" and other publications, as well as official and informational yearbooks, is crucial for institutional aspects and chronological context, as it can offer additional details not available in different sources. Memoirs can offer a broader perspective, surpass the constraints of institutional and political history, and outline the atmosphere of the diplomatic environment in Bucharest during the period when Juan Pedro de Aladro was active. They can also provide insights into his integration into the Bucharest milieu, his personality, and his intellectual or ideological references. However, this significant source (memoirs) must be cross-referenced with other historical sources to prevent the subjectivity of autobiographical authors and the possibility of focusing on gossip or trivialities.

Through this case study, which focuses on the activities of Spain's first permanent diplomatic representative in Romania, we aim to integrate both institutional and biographical elements into the history of Romanian-Spanish diplomatic relations in the latter part of the 19th century. The current article aims to be the first in a series that will present the diplomatic relations between Romania and Spain up to World War I, providing the necessary elements for a future synthesis.

THE BEGINNING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN ROMANIA AND SPAIN

Diplomatic relations between Romania and Spain were established following the recognition of Romania's international legal status at the Berlin Congress of 1878. However, there were sporadic interactions². Ever since 1869, the authorities

2012, pp. 31-40) provides information about Romanian records at Madrid's archives.

² Josefina López Sanmartín, *Spania și România. De la Unirea Principatelor 1859 până la stabilirea de relații diplomatice hispano-române 1881* [Spain and Romania. From the Union of the Principalities 1859 to the Establishment of Spanish-Romanian Diplomatic Relations 1881], in „Studii. Revistă de istorie”, vol. 23, 1970, no. 6, pp. 1133-1157. For earlier interactions, see Eugen Denize, *Relațiile româno-spaniole până la începutul*

in Madrid, for political and pragmatic reasons, considered the establishment of a general consulate in Bucharest, intending to appoint Viscount d'Ecqueviller, a close associate of the liberal general Prim, a member of the interim government established after the "Glorious" revolution of 1868, which overthrew Queen Isabella II's absolutist regime³. The Romanian politicians' unwillingness to appoint d'Ecqueviller, seen as unrepresentative, combined with Spain's deepening political crisis, which would last several years, led to the project's postponement⁴.

A significant moment in the path towards establishing bilateral relations occurred at the beginning of 1875. The new Spanish king, Alfonso XII, officially notified Prince Carol I of his ascension to the throne in a letter dated January 16, 1875⁵. Because Romania was still under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, the gesture of the monarch from Madrid deeply displeased the Ottoman authorities, who were irritated by the "strange procedure of the King of Spain"⁶. The Romanian diplomatic agents in Istanbul and Vienna, General I. Gr. Ghica and Gheorghe Costaforu wrote, in almost identical terms, about how the Ottoman authorities perceived and interpreted the Spanish initiative, which they saw as an implicit acceptance of Romania's independence⁷. The language employed in Alfonso XII's letter was interpreted unambiguously in Istanbul. By informing the Romanian prince of his accession to the Spanish throne, the monarch indicated care for maintaining a "fraternal agreement with foreign sovereigns"⁸. The Ottoman Empire appreciated that the Madrid authorities had misbehaved. Alfonso XII's accession to the throne was notified to Turkey by a simple letter. In contrast, the letter sent to the Romanian ruler was delivered by a special envoy, namely the Spanish Minister to Vienna, Cipriano del Mazo⁹. Carol I received him

secolului al XIX-lea [Romanian-Spanish Relations until the Beginning of the 19th Century], Târgoviște, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2006, *passim*.

³ Julio Valdeón, Joseph Pérez, Santos Juliá, *Istoria Spaniei* [History of Spain], translation and notes by Constantin Sfeatcu, București, Editura Viga, 2011, p. 356.

⁴ Josefina López Sanmartín, *Spania și România...*, pp. 1140-1141.

⁵ Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], Bucharest (abbreviated, hereinafter AMAE), *Arhiva Istorică* [Historical Archive], vol. 260, f. 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 46. The entire episode is extensively presented by Dan Berindei, *Politică externă și diplomație la începuturile României moderne* [Foreign Policy and Diplomats at the Beginning of Modern Romania], București, Editura Mica Valahie, 2011, pp. 57-60.

⁷ AMAE, *Arhiva Istorică* [Historical Archive], vol. 260, ff. 30-31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 18-21.

in audience and handed him a reply letter in which the Romanian monarch thanked the King of Spain and assured him of his respect and sincere desire to improve relations between their countries¹⁰. Count Benomar, the Spanish Minister in Berlin, advised the Romanian diplomatic agent in the Reich capital, Nicolae Kretzulescu, to persuade political decision-makers in Bucharest to send an extraordinary envoy to Madrid to convey Prince Carol I's congratulations to the new Spanish monarch in response to Alfonso XII's gesture¹¹. However, this idea was not implemented. The personal connections between the two monarchs remained strong, even if they did not develop into political links between the two states at the time. Expressing his good feelings and wishing to reciprocate the gesture made by the Spanish king, in December 1875, two Romanian officers, Majors Schina and Rasty, assigned to the Spanish army, were instructed to present themselves at King Alfonso XII's court and convey New Year's congratulations on behalf of Prince Carol¹².

The letter from the king of Madrid worsened Turkish-Spanish relations, almost causing a rupture, because the Porte interpreted the monarch's gesture as an attack on the sultan's suzerain rights over Romania.¹³ As a result, the appointment of Augusto Conte, the next Spanish minister in Istanbul, who was to succeed Guillermo Crespo, was postponed for several months. Only after the Ottoman authorities received some satisfaction, while pretending to believe that the initiative had no "political" significance, and were convinced of the political decision-makers' desire in Madrid to maintain friendly relations, was the incident resolved and the new minister able to take up his position.¹⁴

The episode demonstrates the Spanish government's interest in the Romanian state, which was inhabited by a Latin-origin people, situated in a geopolitically significant location, and ruled by a member of the Hohenzollern

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 52-53.

¹² The transmission of the congratulations, without further details, is also mentioned in *Memoriile regelui Carol I al României. De un martor ocular* [The Memoirs of King Carol I of Romania. By an Eyewitness], vol. II, 1869-1875, edited and with a preface by Stelian Neagoe, București, Editura Scripta, 1993, p. 348. See also AMAE, *Arhiva Istorică* [Historical Archive], vol. 260, f. 61.

¹³ AMAE, *Arhiva Istorică* [Historical Archive], vol. 260, f. 30.

¹⁴ Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia española. La Edad Contemporánea*, volumen duodécimo, Madrid, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores u de Cooperación, Secretaría General Técnica, 2017, p. 133.

family. Such initiatives were repeated, albeit intermittently and mostly ceremonially. On the Romanian side, Prince Carol of Hohenzollern and the authorities in Bucharest demonstrated an undisguised interest in maintaining good relations with Spain, which translated into merely protocolary ties, as a diplomatic post/legation had not yet been established. Not forgetting the Madrid sovereign's initiative from 1875, a special mission was dispatched to Madrid and Lisbon in March 1880 to inform them of the proclamation of Romania's independence. The Bucharest government's initiative was part of a broader campaign to improve relations with countries that were not parties to the Berlin Treaty and had no Romanian diplomatic agents. To achieve this objective, several special missions were dispatched to several countries between 1879 and 1880. This was a clear manifestation of new concerns in Romania's international relations, as the government tried to strengthen and expand its foreign political ties and assert its new status as an autonomous state in international affairs. Alexandru Plagino, a prominent Romanian conservative politician, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senate President, was sent to the Iberian Peninsula.¹⁵

The significance of the two monarchs, Alfonso XII and Carol I, in forging bilateral relations should not be overlooked. It was a situation that characterised the realm of European diplomacy, in which meritocracy and the need to enlarge the diplomatic corps complemented monarchies' involvement in foreign affairs.

In addition to the general aspects of foreign policy and the desire to establish relations between the two countries at the legation level, which were strengthened following Romania's independence and the proclamation of the Kingdom, without ignoring the example set by other European states, another issue of a different nature was also of great significance. We are referring to Romania's assistance following the terrible floods in Eastern Spain,¹⁶ which was

¹⁵ Plagino was supposed to travel to Madrid as early as 1879 to inform the Spanish authorities about Romania's independence and award King Alfonso XII with a high distinction: the Grand Cross of the Order of the "Star of Romania" ["Steaua României"]. See Josefina López Sanmartín, *Espania și România...*, p. 1149. However, Plagino did not arrive in Spain at that time, and the delay and, ultimately, the cancellation of this mission caused some irritation among the political authorities in Madrid. This episode is extensively presented by the Spanish researcher mentioned here (*Ibid.*, pp. 1149-1152).

¹⁶ Asensio Martínez Jódar, *Fotografía y catástrofes en la España del siglo XIX: el reportaje sobre las inundaciones en Murcia en octubre de 1879*, paper included in *II Jornadas sobre Investigación en Historia de la Fotografía: 1839-1939, un siglo de fotografía: Zaragoza, 25-27 octubre*, José Antonio Hernández Latas (dir.), Lázaro Sebastián, Francisco Javier (coord.), Instituto "Fernando El Católico", 2018, pp. 47-58, See:

acknowledged by Spanish officials, who expressed their gratitude. In February 1881, the Spanish minister in Vienna conveyed to Ioan Bălăceanu, the Romanian plenipotentiary in the Austro-Hungarian capital, the official gratitude of all Spain for the subscriptions opened in Romania to assist those affected by the devastating floods in the provinces of Murcia and Cartagena.¹⁷ The official journal in Bucharest ("Monitorul Oficial al României") acknowledged the authorities' gratitude, suggesting that the gesture was also a political move.¹⁸

JUAN PEDRO DE ALADRO, SPAIN'S DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE IN ROMANIA

The proclamation of the Kingdom on May 14/26, 1881, and the Romanian authorities' aid to the victims of the floods in Spain accelerated the Spanish authorities' plan to send a permanent diplomatic representative to Bucharest. They were persuaded that such a diplomatic post would not only enhance ties with the new independent state in Southeastern Europe, but also with other countries in the region.¹⁹ Still, they appreciated Romania's capital's geopolitical, geostrategic, and geoeconomic position. Count Benomar, Spain's plenipotentiary in Berlin, stated that Bucharest had become "a good information centre regarding the situation in the East [of Europe]."²⁰ Other diplomats saw Bucharest as a critical pivot for comprehending the political situation in the continent's southeastern regions. Prince Bernhard von Bülow, who had himself been the German Empire's representative in Romania before becoming Chancellor, noted what his French colleague in Bucharest, M. de Coutouly, had told him during a conversation that Bucharest had become "*le tremplin des ambassadeurs*" ("the springboard of ambassadors").²¹ Another contemporary, this time a Romanian, stated that "year by year, Romania is becoming a more important

<https://ifc.dpz.es/recursos/publicaciones/37/13/04martinezjodar.pdf> (Accessed on 07.03.2025).

¹⁷ AMAE, *Arhiva Istorică* [Historical Archive], vol. 260, f. 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 65.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 25.

²⁰ *Independența României în conștiința europeană* [The Independence of Romania in European Consciousness], a document collection edited by Corneliu Mihail Lungu, Tudor Bucur, Ioana Alexandru Negreanu, București, Editura Semne, 1997, p. 306.

²¹ *Mémoires du Chancelier Prince de Bülow*, tom. IV. *La jeunesse et les premières années de diplomate à Paris, Saint-Pétersbourg et Rome*, Traduction de Henri Bloch, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1931, p. 431.

centre for foreign diplomats"²². Significantly, the position was considered a major diplomatic post by most European chancelleries.

Romania's capital piqued the interest of Madrid's political circles, which sought to expand their network of diplomatic posts to maintain Spain's standing in international affairs. Of course, at the time, political and economic ties between the two countries, located at the ends of the European continent, were weak. More importantly, given the earlier reference to Count Benomar, it seems that the Spanish authorities sought a privileged observation post to monitor the political situation in Eastern Europe. Undoubtedly, other factors also influenced the decision. After 1878, the Great Powers opened legations in Bucharest and appointed plenipotentiary ministers to the capital of independent Romania, prompting the authorities in Madrid to follow a similar path.

After Romania was elevated to the status of a Kingdom on March 26, 1881, Alfonso XII sent an extraordinary mission to Bucharest, led by Deputy Juan Pedro de Aladro, to express congratulations on this historic event. The audience took place at the Cotroceni Palace on May 5/17, 1881, just a few days before the official ceremonies.²³ Alfonso XII's gesture of respect and deference left a lasting impression in Bucharest. Gratitude is expressed to the King of Spain on behalf of King Carol I, a few days after Aladro's encounter. On that occasion, the Romanian authorities expressed hope for improved connections between the two nations, which would be fulfilled and strengthened by establishing official diplomatic relations and appointing a diplomatic representative in both Bucharest and Madrid. Later, the Marquis of Moral, Spain's plenipotentiary to the King of Romania, reminded Carol I that Alfonso XII was "the first European sovereign to send a mission to congratulate him when he was proclaimed King."²⁴

On May 10/22, 1881, the Royal Palace hosted the coronation ceremony for

²² Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [The Central Historical National Archives] (abbreviated hereafter as ANIC), Fund *Alexandru Socec*, file no. 9, f. 34.

²³ See *Memoriile Regelui Carol I al României. De un martor ocular* [The Memoirs of King Carol I of Romania. By an Eyewitness], vol. IV. 1878-1881, Edition and Index by Stelian Neagoe, București, Editura Machiavelli, 1994, p. 393.

²⁴ Apud Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia...*, volumen duodécimo, p. 135, note 232. See also the brief mention in King Carol I's memoirs, *Memoriile Regelui Carol I...*, vol. IV, p. 393: "5/17 May [1881]. Spain responded to the King's notification letter through a special envoy, Don Pedro Juan de Aladro. Now, all the Powers have recognised the Kingdom of Romania. Don Pedro brings, apart from the letter from King Alfonso XII, a letter from his mother, Queen Isabella, who, in the old friendship she holds for King Carol, expresses her particular joy for his success")

Romania's royal couple, King Carol I and Queen Elisabeta (Carmen Sylva). During this historic event, the diplomatic corps was also welcomed²⁵. The next day, May 23, at 6 p.m., Aladro attended a gala supper at the Royal Palace, which fifty guests attended²⁶. Foreign royal envoys also participated at the Bucharest celebrations. Telegrams and messages of congratulations arrived from various countries. King Carol I himself commented on the "unanimity" around this significant occasion for the dynasty and the government, saying that "from all countries, streams of dispatches, addresses, and letters" arrived, as well as "the warm presentation from the entire European press"²⁷.

A royal order published in Madrid on June 23, 1881, established the Spanish Legation in the Kingdom of Romania, and Don Juan Pedro de Aladro was appointed chargé d'affaires (Encargado de Negocios) in Bucharest.²⁸ The Marquis of Vega de Armijo, Spain's Minister of State, expressed in a letter sent to Bucharest the desire and hope that this appointment will help to deepen bilateral relations. The new chargé d'affaires' personal qualities were complimented, and Romanian officials were asked to grant him accreditation.²⁹ The immediate response from Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eugeniu Stătescu, underlined the

²⁵ Carol I al României, *Jurnal* [Diary], vol. I, 1881-1887, establishing the text, translation from German, introductory study and notes by Vasile Docea, Iasi, Editura Polirom, p. 70.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁷ Sorin Cristescu, *Correspondența personală a Regelui Carol I: 1878-1912* [The Personal Correspondence of King Carol I: 1878-1912], București, Editura Tritonic, 2005, p. 96: Carol I to Maria of Flanders, Bucharest, March 22/April 3, 1881.

²⁸ AMAE, Fund *Reprezentanți străini* 10, Letter A, vol. 1, unpaginated; Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia...*, p. 135; Berindei Dan, *Madrid*, in ****Reprezentanțele diplomatice ale României* [The Diplomatic Representatives of Romania], vol. II, 1911-1939, București, Editura Politică, 1971, p. 72. Juan Pedro de Aladro y Pérez, Marquis of Castro Fuerte, was born on May 8, 1845, in Puerto Real, Andalusia. He entered the diplomatic service in 1867 and went on to serve in several important posts: Vienna, Paris, The Hague, and Brussels, before being appointed chargé d'affaires in Bucharest in 1881. At the end of 1884, his mission in Romania ended, and he was appointed Minister of Spain to Caracas. However, he did not take up the post. The same happened in 1890 after another appointment. Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia...*, pp. 135-136, including notes 233 and 235. A short biographical piece on Juan Pedro de Aladro was published in "Diario de Jerez" (electronic edition) on November 17, 2013. See: https://www.diariodejerez.es/jerez/increible-Juan-Pedro-Aladro-kastrioti_0_753524892.html (Accessed on 11.02.2025).

²⁹ AMAE, Fund *Reprezentanți străini* 10, Letter A, vol. 1, unpaginated; "România liberă", Year VI, no. 1508, July 1, 1882, p. 1.

authorities' satisfaction with the appointment of a Spanish diplomat to Romania.³⁰

Stătescu requested, through a report submitted on February 17/29, 1882, that the Council of Ministers respond to the Spanish "act of courtesy" by appointing a head of diplomatic mission to Madrid, "to contribute, on our part, to maintaining the most cordial relations with an amicable nation with which we share such precious historical ties".³¹ To support his proposal, he evaluated two options, which he recommended to the Council of Ministers: accrediting the Romanian Minister Plenipotentiary from Paris to Madrid or appointing a chargé d'affaires in the Spanish capital. He considered that the latter idea was the best solution, not only because it was more practical, but also because it followed the same strategy as the Spanish government.³² Although the Council of Ministers agreed with the Minister's suggestion, which was accepted at their meeting on March 3 15, 1882³³ it was never implemented. George Cretzianu was appointed Romania's Extraordinary Envoy and Plenipotentiary Minister to Madrid in 1913, before World War I³⁴.

The Romanian authorities considered it appropriate to establish a few honorary consulates in Spain. The first was established in Barcelona in 1885 and became a general consulate a decade later. The foundation of the consulate in Barcelona was viewed as a response and a demonstration of respect to the Spanish authorities, who had created the legation in Bucharest in 1881. This is supported by the Romanian authorities' correspondence, which leaves no doubt about the significance they attached to this action. Before the First World War, Romania had established two additional honorary consulates, at Cadiz (1890) and Valencia (1913)³⁵. Romania's consular network in Spain was quite limited, not just compared to other countries, but also compared to the significantly higher number of consular offices Romania had set up in other countries such as Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Ottoman Empire. This was a clear indication of the low level of bilateral trade and the relatively limited political

³⁰ AMAE, Fund *Reprezentanți străini* 10, Letter A, vol. 1, unpaginated.

³¹ AMAE, Fund *Problema* 82, Spania, 1875-1946, f. 10.

³² *Ibid.* See also Dan Berindei, *Politică externă...*, pp. 60-61.

³³ AMAE, Fund *Problema* 82, Spania, 1875-1946, f. 12.

³⁴ AMAE, Fund *Problema* 77, Letter C, no. 46, vol. I, unpaginated.

³⁵ AMAE, Fund *Problema* 75, vol. 45, *passim*. See also Dr. Stelian Obiziuc, *Consulatele onorifice ale României din străinătate – scurt istoric (1862-1948)* [The Honorary Consulates of Romania Abroad – A Brief History (1862-1948)], in "Caiete Diplomatice/ Diplomatic Notes", Bucharest, Volumes IV-V, 2016-2017, No. 4-5, p. 36.

contacts. Until the foundation of the Romanian legation in Spain in 1913, consulates in Spain were under the jurisdiction of the legation in Paris³⁶.

Juan Pedro de Aladro adapted quickly and efficiently to the Romanian capital's diplomatic corps and society. Don Pedro Samaniego, the legation secretary, aided him in directing the mission by handling the affairs of the diplomatic representation when Aladro was abroad for professional or personal reasons.³⁷

Juan Pedro de Aladro was appointed Spain's Resident Minister in Bucharest in 1883, following reforms initiated by the new Spanish diplomatic career law, which abolished the status of *chargé d'affaires* in favour of that of resident minister. On March 15, 1883, a letter from Madrid confirmed Aladro's appointment as a resident minister accredited to the King of Romania. The letter also detailed his honours and decorations, which included Commander with Plaque of the Royal Order of Isabella the Catholic, Commander of the Royal Order of Charles III, Grand Officer of the Order "Star of Romania" („Steaua României”), Grand Cross of Takovo, and Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. It was believed that bilateral ties would improve further, as Aladro's prior actions in Bucharest were seen as a strong assurance in this regard.³⁸

On April 25, 1883, Juan Pedro de Aladro sent a copy of his letters of accreditation to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and requested that the minister take the necessary steps to secure an audience with the King of Romania.³⁹ Carol I was overseas at the time; thus, the ceremony to hand over the letters of accreditation was scheduled for May 13, 1883.⁴⁰ On that occasion, he also handed the monarch a letter from the King of Spain telling him of the marriage of Infanta Dona Maria de la Paz, Alfonso XII's sister, to Prince Ludwig Ferdinand of Bavaria. He had already forwarded a copy of the letters to Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁴¹ On May 12/24, 1883, the Romanian sovereign responded via Aladro, expressing satisfaction at the appointment of a Spanish resident minister in Romania's capital.⁴²

³⁶ "Anuarul Bucureștilor pe 1904", București, Institutul de Arte Grafice "Carol Göbl", 1904, p. 44.

³⁷ AMAE, Fund *Reprezentanți străini* 10, Letter A, vol. 1, unpaginated.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. II, unpaginated.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, unpaginated.

⁴⁰ Carol I al României, *Jurnal...*, vol. I, p. 222; "România liberă", Year VII, no. 1755, May 4, 1883, p. 1.

⁴¹ AMAE, Fund *Reprezentanți străini* 10, Letter A, vol. 2, unpaginated; "România liberă", Year VII, no. 1755, May 4, 1883, p. 1.

⁴² AMAE, Fund *Reprezentanți străini* 10, Letter A, vol. 2, unpaginated.

According to King Carol I's diary, Juan Pedro de Aladro was received in audience by the King of Romania on multiple occasions and invited to dinner.⁴³ Other accounts demonstrate Juan Pedro de Aladro's ability to adapt to Romanian realities and the norms of Bucharest at the time. High society life in Romania's capital may be rather challenging. The Court Balls were significant occasions, attended by Bucharest's high society and diplomatic corps. Diplomats were expected to participate in formal attire, as per protocol and tradition, accompanied by their wives and select legation staff. The number of guests was quite large. Two thousand five hundred invitations were sent out for the grand New Year's Ball held at the Royal Palace in 1882.⁴⁴

Juan Pedro de Aladro also frequently attended dances, banquets, and other high-society events in Bucharest, as well as diplomatic functions of the diplomatic corps.⁴⁵ He also participated in a series of Jockey Club meetings that brought together the most stylish and sparkling members of Bucharest society.⁴⁶ He was occasionally distinguished for his flamboyant behaviour, such as his eager participation in a fun "gastronomic duel."⁴⁷ Because the competition ended in a tie, Aladro had to repeat the experience at additional similar events. What matters is that he easily integrated into Bucharest society and the diplomatic community. These are delightful aspects that demonstrate the social side of Aladro's work in Bucharest, which was far from insignificant, as they reveal a crucial element of diplomacy at the time: sociability.

Juan Pedro de Aladro's mission ended in early 1884. The cover of his file, which is held at the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest, mentions his departure from office on December 31, 1883 / January 12, 1884.⁴⁸ However, this is a mistake. King Carol I recorded in his diary on February 11/23, 1884, the welcoming of the Spanish diplomat who was going on a vacation.⁴⁹ A few days later, a dispatch from the Havas agency was issued in the

⁴³ Carol I al României, *Jurnal...*, vol. I, p. 69, 72, 91, 122, 133, 222, 237, 282.

⁴⁴ Sorin Cristescu, *Correspondența personală ...*, p. 115: Carol I to Fritz von Hohenzollern, Bucharest, December 28, 1881/ January 9, 1882.

⁴⁵ Claymoor, *La vie à Bucarest 1882-1883*, Bucharest, Imprimerie Thiel & Weiss, s.a., pp. 37, 65, 71, 100, 181, 203.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁴⁷ C. Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată* [Bucharest of the Past], vol. 1, București, Editura Ziarului "Universul", 1927, pp. 274-276.

⁴⁸ AMAE, Fund *Reprezentanți străini* 10, Litera A, vol. 2, unpaginated.

⁴⁹ Carol I al României, *Jurnal...*, vol. I, p. 282.

Romanian press, proclaiming the appointment of a new Spanish minister plenipotentiary, the Marquis de Casa Fuerte, to succeed Aladro, "who will soon leave us."⁵⁰ Pedro de Samaniego, the legation's secretary, was also scheduled to be relocated to Rome.⁵¹

Aladro never returned to Bucharest to present his recall letters. However, the Marquis of Casa Fuerte was never appointed.⁵² Emilio de Ojeda y Perpiñán was then nominated, but he never arrived in Bucharest.⁵³ Instead, Miguel Bertodano Marqués del Moral was appointed. He was officially received by the King for the presentation of his credentials as resident minister on 31 July/12 August 1884.⁵⁴ Until he took up his post, Miguel Torey García served as chargé d'affaires *ad interim*, according to letters from the Legation in Bucharest.⁵⁵

After the end of his mission in Romania, Juan Pedro de Aladro's diplomatic career practically came to an end. Although he was designated Spain's minister to Caracas in 1885, he never took up the office. The same thing happened in 1890, following a new appointment.⁵⁶

In the years that followed, he became a strong supporter of the Albanian cause, supporting nationalists who desired freedom from the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of an independent Albanian state. Although independence was not declared until 1912, the Albanian national movement was active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They also considered a potential candidate for the Albanian throne at the right time. Juan Pedro de Aladro's name was among those nominated. Aladro, who adopted the surname Kastrioti, fought

⁵⁰ "România liberă", Year VIII, no. 2004, Mars 9, 1884, p. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² The historian Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun mentions Pedro Álvarez de Toledo y Acuña, Marqués de Casa Fuerte, as Aladro's successor in the position at Bucharest until 1887, after which Miguel Bertodano, Marqués de Moral, would have taken over from 1887 to 1889. Cf. Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia...*, volumen duodécimo, p. 136. However, this is an error, as we find the Marqués de Moral at the head of the mission in Bucharest as early as 1884.

⁵³ Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia española. Apéndice I. Repertorio diplomático. Listas cronológicas de representantes desde la Alta Edad Media hasta el año 2000*, Madrid, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2023, p. 244.

⁵⁴ Carol I al României, *Jurnal...*, vol. I, p. 313.

⁵⁵ ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 6, unnumbered.

⁵⁶ Miguel Ángel Ochoa Brun, *Historia de la diplomacia...*, volumen duodécimo, pp. 135-136, including notes 233 and 235.

for the new cause, claiming descent through his maternal line from the Albanian princely Kastrioti dynasty, which had played an essential role in the country's medieval history. According to certain speculations, he planned to seize power by force, prompting Turkey to send a military detachment to the Albanian region to deter any military action by the Spanish pretender.⁵⁷

The adventurous endeavour, however, never materialised, and Aladro was compelled to forsake his dynastic claims. He spent the final years of his life in Paris, where he died on February 15, 1914.⁵⁸ Following the establishment of the Albanian state, Prince Wilhelm of Wied, the grandson of Queen Elisabeth of Romania, was elected to the throne after extensive preparations and negotiations among Albanian deputies and European powers.⁵⁹

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ALADRO WITH THE MINISTRY OF STATE (MINISTERIO DE ESTADO): THEMES AND ISSUES

Juan Pedro de Aladro regularly sent reports and telegrams to the central office. From their content, one can conclude that the diplomatic measures he took were aimed at developing bilateral relations and advancing his country's interests, given his position. The documents he sent from Bucharest are brief. Still, they demonstrate keen observation, a strong awareness of Romanian realities, and a polished analytical perspective on the internal and external challenges confronting the young Romanian state. His letters have a straightforward structure: first, he explains Romania's internal politics; second, its foreign policy and the international issues the new state must face; and finally, he provides information about the Royal Court. Other information is released periodically, including details on public health conditions and the Danube trade. Romania's political history in the early 1880s can be partially reconstructed through correspondence written by the Spanish minister in Bucharest. All the major issues confronting the Old Kingdom are addressed, from internal political tensions

⁵⁷ "L'Indépendance Roumaine", 26^e année, no. 7796, 2 (15) mai 1902, p. 2. About this episode, see Atdhe Thaçi, "*The Spanish Adventurer*": Ottoman Surveillance of Aladro Kastrioti, the Pretender for the Albanian Throne, in "Journal of Balkan Studies", 4 (1), January 2024, pp. 27-45.

⁵⁸ https://www.diariodejerez.es/jerez/increible-Juan-Pedro-Aladro-kastrioti_0_753524892.html (accessed on 11.02.2025).

⁵⁹ A few details can be found in Guy Gauthier, *Les Aigles et les Lions. Histoire des monarchies balkaniques de 1817 à 1974*, Paris, Éditions France-Empire, 1996, pp. 263-264.

between the government led by liberal Ion C. Brătianu and the domestic opposition to external matters, such as the complex Danube issue and Romania's growing alignment with the Central Powers (the Triple Alliance). His letters reveal the interests and views of the European nations towards the Kingdom of Romania, as well as the policies of Bucharest's decision-makers. It also depicts the behaviour and attitude of the diplomats accredited in the Romanian capital.

After becoming an expert observer of Eastern European issues, Juan Pedro de Aladro advised the authorities in Madrid to enhance interest in this part of the continent, expand business links with Romania, and strengthen political contacts. Given his position as chargé d'affaires and then resident minister in Bucharest, it was understandable that he would act in this way.

Aladro was particularly interested in Romania's political elite and the relationship between the liberal administration and the opposition, and he relayed information about the country's internal political affairs through dozens of reports and telegrams. He emphasised the liberal government's quasi-absolute control and the conservative opposition's weakness, which was divided into many factions with different leaders and agendas.⁶⁰ Regardless of disagreements between the ruling circles and their political enemies, whether within or outside Parliament, the Spanish envoy made no criticism or condemnation of the Romanian political class or its political parties. At most, his letters can be interpreted as expressing displeasure with the occasionally vengeful tone of parliamentary debates, but this could be just a mistaken impression of the reader.

Aladro monitored everything that happened in the Romanian royal court with fascination, including information about the king and queen, in nearly all his telegrams and Ministry of State reports, which covered the monarchs' travels, visits, and health.⁶¹ Aladro also followed parliamentary debates, reporting extensively in dozens of dispatches on discussions to amend the 1866 Constitution, particularly when the number of electoral colleges was under consideration – a topic that greatly concerned him. He watched these debates with

⁶⁰ See telegram no. 41, Bucharest, May 13, 1883, from Resident Minister Juan Pedro de Aladro to the Minister of State (Ministerio de Estado), regarding the outcome of the elections in Bucharest, in ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 6, unnumbered. See also, among others, the *Monthly Report for February* [February 29, 1884], Bucharest, Aladro to the Minister of State, in ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 8, unnumbered.

⁶¹ For example, he was very concerned about Queen Elisabeth's (Carmen Sylva) state of health. See, *inter alia*, ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 8, unnumbered. Aladro to the Minister of State, Bucharest, January 31, 1884.

genuine interest and passion.⁶²

In one of his final correspondences, dated April 30, 1884, he recounted how the Senate proceedings were unfolding, stressing "its lengthy and lively debate" ("su largo y animado debate").⁶³ Moreover, he considered that Romania's fundamental law was an indicator of the country's progress, achieved in a short period: "It is, in two words, Distinguished Gentleman, the spirit of the Romanian Constitution of 1866, which is now being considered for reform and which, fortunately, thanks to Article 129, can be amended without violent turmoil and to the satisfaction of the country – whose progressive development of its institutions along the path of civilization has remarkably advanced in these 17 years."⁶⁴

Aladro published several insightful words on the Jewish situation in Romania, demonstrating a keen awareness of the "Jewish question" there. In one of his first letters to the State Ministry, he provided brief explanations regarding the country's mood and the tumult against the Israelites, also attaching the circular issued by the Minister of the Interior, ordering measures to calm the public opinion.⁶⁵ The "Jewish question" had significant domestic and international reverberations, owing to the actual and legal status of the Jewish population, which was subjected to vexations and administrative and legal abuses by the authorities, as well as the anti-Jewish prejudices of a large part of the population. Just as he arrived at his post in Bucharest, he received a communication from the honorary consul of Spain in the Danube port of Galati, informing the chargé d'affaires of Spain in Bucharest that some Israelites had visited the consulate to inquire about the conditions for emigration to the Iberian country.⁶⁶ It is not surprising that Aladro informed the authorities in Madrid about the unrest directed against the Israelites.

Aladro was attentive to the evolution of Romania's independent foreign policy, for which he had been accredited, and he kept Madrid's political circles informed of developments. The Danube issue and the disagreements between Romania and Austria-Hungary are regularly mentioned in the Spanish envoy's

⁶² ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 6, unnumbered. See, for example, telegram no. 23, Bucharest, March 15, 1883, Aladro to the Minister of State.

⁶³ ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 8, unnumbered. See, for example, *Memoria mensual de Abril* [April 30, 1884], Bucharest, Aladro to the Minister of State.

⁶⁴ Aladro to the Minister of State, Bucharest, no. 2, January 9, 1883, in ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 6, unnumbered.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Aladro to the Minister of State, Bucharest, no. 15, October 15, 1881.

⁶⁶ ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 8, unnumbered. Galatz, July 9 iulie, Foscolo to Aladro.

official letters in Bucharest. He acknowledged this almost obsessive concern. "Since the establishment of His Majesty's Legation in 1881, I have been preoccupied with reporting through my official dispatches on the various aspects that have arisen in the so-called 'Danube Question'...",⁶⁷ he wrote.

The Spanish diplomat informed the State Ministry on multiple occasions about the Romanian public's discontent with their compatriots' status in Transylvania, as well as tensions between Romania and Austria-Hungary. This was one of the most frequently mentioned topics in his diplomatic letters. He described and explained specific occurrences in his correspondence, referring not only to the political aspects of Romanian-Austro-Hungarian relations but also to public opinion on the issue. For example, in one such dispatch to Madrid, he predicted adverse reactions abroad – particularly in Austria-Hungary – to the events held in Iași, Moldavia's former capital, in June 1883, on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of the national hero Stephen the Great, which had sparked a wave of patriotic enthusiasm. Senator I. C. Grădișteanu delivered a harshly critical speech against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the Hungarian authorities' denationalisation strategy in Transylvania. Aladro concluded the following: "It is beyond doubt that everything that took place in Iași will have a very negative impact in Europe, and especially in Austria, which will surely, according to the general opinion of my colleagues, be unable to refrain from requesting explanations from the Romanian government."⁶⁸

Which is precisely what happened. On multiple occasions, Romanian officials were forced to issue official apologies for incidents that outraged political circles in Vienna and Budapest. Aladro consistently reported on these provocations. In a letter dated January 25, 1884, sent to the State Minister, he mentioned an incident that had previously occurred in Iași. The Austrian consul, who had been invited to a Chamber of Commerce conference, was forced to leave the venue amid loud chants from some of the participants: "Out with Austria!"⁶⁹ The administration was forced to distance itself from the demonstrations and issue an official apology.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 6, unnumbered. Aladro to the Minister of State, Bucharest, no. 82, December 5, 1883.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Aladro to the Minister of State, Bucharest, no. 51, June 25, 1883. See also *Ibid.*, no. 56, Bucharest, July 5, 1883, Aladro to the Minister of State.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 8, Bucharest, January 25, 1884, Aladro to the Minister of State.

⁷⁰ ANIC, *Microfilme Spania*, roll 8, unnumbered. Aladro to the Minister of State, Bucharest, January 31, 1884.

Aladro correctly recognised Romanian society's tensions over Hungary's nationality policy and highlighted the implications of this issue, as well as the commercial disagreements, for bilateral relations at the highest level. Undoubtedly, we will continue to present his reports on these issues, which he brought to the attention of the State Ministry and attempted to explain to the authorities in Madrid by situating them within the Romanian context. However, to avoid overextending this article, we will limit our discussion to these cases.

Romania's foreign policy also prompted pragmatic reflections from the Spanish diplomat, who considered the potential benefits his own country might derive from a more substantial involvement in Southeastern Europe and from deepening ties with Romania. He was particularly interested in strengthening economic and commercial relations between the two countries. To that end, and in the interests of both Spain and Romania, he advocated negotiating and eventually signing a bilateral treaty on trade and navigation.⁷¹ Although this goal was not achieved during Aladro's stay in Bucharest due to the weakened trade ties, his recommendations to the State Ministry demonstrate his intention to secure a commercial agreement. Such a treaty was not reached until 1908. The Convention on Trade and Navigation between Romania and Spain was signed on December 1, 1908, after talks in Vienna between representatives from both parties. It was signed by the Marquis Julio de Arellano, Spain's minister to the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Nicolae Mișu, Romania's extraordinary envoy and minister plenipotentiary in the same capital.⁷²

⁷¹ Josefina López Sanmartin, *Contacte și relații comerciale între Spania și România până la semnarea „Modusului vivendi” comercial din 1923* [Contacts and Commercial Relations between Spain and Romania until the Signing of the Commercial “Modus vivendi” of 1923], in “Studii. Revistă de Istorie”, 1971, 24, no. 6, pp. 1187-1210; Ioan Raul I. Neacșu, *Contribuții la istoria relațiilor comerciale româno-spaniole în secolul al XIX-lea* [Contributions to the History of Romanian-Spanish Trade Relations in the 19th Century], in “Studii. Revistă de Istorie”, tome 29, no. 5, 1976, pp. 741-748; Denisa Victoria Andronache, *Aspecte privind relațiile comerciale româno-spaniole* [Aspects regarding Romanian-Spanish Trade Relations], in “Buletinul Centrului pentru dialog între științe și teologie”, Year IX, no. 1/2012, Craiova, Editura Universitaria, pp. 155-169.

⁷² The convention established the principles upon which export and import duties between the two states were to be set. These duties were not to exceed those applied to the goods of the most favoured nation. Romanian and Spanish vessels, along with their cargo, were to be subject to the same regulations as those applied to the ships and cargo of the most favoured nation. The Chamber approved the convention of Deputies on December 17 and by the Senate on December 18, 1908. The text was published in

Similarly, to enhance bilateral business contacts, Aladro was entirely convinced of the necessity and value of constructing Spanish consulates in Romania, especially in the ports along the Danube and the Black Sea.⁷³ On November 27, 1881, he sent a telegram to the State Ministry, recommending the establishment of consulates in numerous Romanian cities with a commercial function.⁷⁴ Until the outbreak of the First World War, several Spanish consulates and vice-consulates operated in Galatz, Brăila, Giurgiu, Constanța, and Sulina.⁷⁵

The diplomat who succeeded him in Bucharest, the Marquis del Moral, continued his work on encouraging countries to come closer together, strengthening bilateral relations, and promoting political and diplomatic circles in Madrid to pay more attention to Romania and to trade with the young state in Southeastern Europe. This represents another chapter in the history of diplomacy, one to which we shall return in a separate study to examine the activities of the first two Spanish diplomatic envoys to the Kingdom of Romania.

CONCLUSIONS

The relevance of Juan Pedro de Aladro's diplomatic mission in Romania is undeniable, as he was the first head of the Spanish legation in Bucharest, helping establish relations between the two countries. Although he stayed in Bucharest for less than three years, and this mission effectively marked the end of his diplomatic career (he had been appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Venezuela twice, in 1885 and 1890, but never took up the post), he was able to elevate the Spanish legation's reputation. This was accomplished despite relations between the two countries not being as strong as Bucharest's with other European capitals. The Spanish diplomat integrated himself remarkably well into Romanian society and the diplomatic corps accredited in Romania's capital, demonstrating his personal qualities and his ability to adapt to a very different environment from both his homeland and Western Europe, where his diplomatic career had begun.

the "Monitorul Oficial" ("Official Gazette"), no. 251, on February 10/23, 1909. The convention entered into force on February 6/19, 1909. See the full text online at the following address: <https://muzeulvirtual.ro/imagini/conventie/> (Accessed on 09.05.2025).

⁷³ See, especially, Josefina López Sanmartín, *Spania și România...*, p. 1156; Denisa Victoria Andronache, *Aspecte privind...*, p. 158.

⁷⁴ Josefina López Sanmartín, *Spania și România...*, p. 1156.

⁷⁵ Denisa Victoria Andronache, *Aspecte privind...*, p. 158.

Aladro, a skilled observer of Eastern European affairs, was a strong defender of the new Romanian state's interests and a consistent supporter of building ties between the Kingdom of Romania and Spain. His insistence on these two directions is consistently reflected in the notes and reports he submitted to the Ministerio de Estado. These documents demonstrate keen observation, a strong awareness of Romanian realities, and a polished analytical perspective on the internal and external challenges confronting the young Romanian state. All the major issues facing the Old Kingdom are addressed, from internal political tensions between the government led by liberal Ion C. Brătianu and the conservative opposition to external matters, such as the complex Danube issue and Romania's growing alignment with the Central Powers. His letters reveal the interests and views of the European nations towards the Kingdom of Romania, as well as the policies of Bucharest's decision-makers. Aladro was a steadfast friend to Romania, understanding the difficult situation faced by the young state in Southeastern Europe, as well as its interests, which occasionally diverged from those of the great European powers, notably the neighbouring empires of Russia and Austria-Hungary. During his assignment in Bucharest, he regularly attempted to keep the Spanish State Ministry informed about Romanian realities, thereby facilitating a clearer understanding of the situation in Romania among Spanish politicians and diplomats. From the content of his correspondence, it can be inferred that the diplomatic measures he took were aimed at developing bilateral relations and serving his country's interests, given his position.

As a keen observer of Eastern European issues, Juan Pedro de Aladro advised the authorities in Madrid to increase interest in this part of the continent, expand business links with Romania, and strengthen political ties. He effectively provided Romania with diplomatic coverage in his own country, aiding in the establishment of a more accurate understanding of the challenges facing Southeastern Europe in general, and the Kingdom of Romania in particular. Given his position as chargé d'affaires and then resident minister in Bucharest, it was understandable that he would act in this way. Consequently, his mission in the Romanian capital remains a milestone in the history of bilateral diplomatic relations. It would fall to the other Spanish diplomats sent to Bucharest to continue what Juan Pedro de Aladro had initiated.

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