

**POLITICAL, DIPLOMATIC AND CULTURAL RELATIONS
BETWEEN ROMANIA AND ITALY AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

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Abstract

A recent research at the Foreign Affairs Ministry Diplomatic Archive in Bucharest revealed a recently unclassified brief that contains information on the political, diplomatic, cultural and economical relations between Romania and Italy after the Second World War. This period of a decade after the end of the most devastating war mankind witnessed was a period in which the two Latin friend countries went separately on their own path, one being thrown in the communist part of the world while the other one went down a smoother way into the capitalist world. In this period, the Romanian-Italian relations started on a descendent path only to come to a normalized situation mostly at a cultural and economic level.

The new authoritarian regime in Bucharest started in 1949 a powerful campaign against western powers in implementing the U.S.S.R. politics that affected our diplomatic, cultural and economic relations with old friend states.

After being supportive one another for many years in accomplishing their national ideals, from unity to independence and from being allies in the Triple Alliance to being enemies in the Second World War, the two Latin states seemed to get along after the Peace Conference in Paris in 1946-1947, but the Soviet influence on our politics ruined all that.

Key words: *Diplomatic Relations, International Relations, Romania, Italy, Second World War*

After the Second World War, the two Latin friend countries went separately on their own path, one being thrown in the communist part of the world while the other one went down a smoother way into the capitalist world.

Even if in the modern era, starting 1859 the two countries fought in the same time for completing their national unity and supported diplomatically one another in the international system, starting with the last world conflagration the bilateral relations between the two became more and more distant because of their interests, their separated international status, Italy being considered a Great Power while Romania a small country from eastern Europe. Moreover, towards the end of the Second World War, Romania broke the alliance with Germany and Italy to go against them for its best interest of that time.

Despite their differences and separated interests, Romania and Italy did not broke the diplomatic relations during the Second World War although between 1943 and 1944 the interests of Romanian in Italy were represented by the Swedish Legation in Rome¹. In 1941 Italy's minister in Bucharest is appointed Renato Bova Scopa and he will represent his country's interests in Romania until 1945. Bova Scopa will recognize in 1943 the new

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¹ Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al României, București (The Archives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, Bucharest, hereinafter: A.M.A.E.), fond Italia, Problema 220/1956, ff. 19-25.

Italian government under the command of Italy's Marshal Pietro Badoglio, after the fall of Mussolini¹.

In December 1944, at the initiative of the Italian government, Romania appoints a Charge d'Affaires ad interim in Rome.

As a token of their good intentions, in January 1945, the Italian government canceled, after the unanimous vote in the Italian Parliament, the arbitrary Wien Dictate from 1940 when the Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany decided to give the northern part of Transylvania to fascist Hungary.

The normal relations between Romania and Italy did not last long because of their different political and ideological orientation. In 1947, as communists were gaining more and more ideological ground in Romania and as extremist forces were cleaned out of the Italian government, the Romanian government proceeded in closing Italy's consulates in Romania while the cultural agreement was denounced.

All this aggressive measures, taken by the Romanian government, were followed by some drastic economical ones that affected permanently the Italian businesses in Romania. The Romanian government claimed that the measures were part of the economical recovery plan that should help Romania rehabilitate after the losses suffered in the Second World War. Nevertheless, the reaction of the Italian Legation in Bucharest and the Foreign Affairs Minister in Rome were extremely consistent blaming the Romanian government of violating the international agreements. In his very not diplomatic response, the Romanian diplomacy stated that it was written in 79th article of the Peace Treaty that all Italian belongings in Romania must be transferred to the U.S.S.R. as reparations².

As a response to the Romanian actions, the Italian courts ruled in March 1949 that based on the Valduz Court decision they have the authority to apply a conservative seizure on all Romanian belongings in Italy, especially on the APIR stocks and on the Romanian vessels that will dock in Italian harbors. Moreover, in 1949, based on the Italian Minister of Treasure proposal, the Italian authorities seized the entire warehouse containing 120.9511 kg of gold deposited at The Italian Commercial Bank under the Maritime Danube Direction ownership, Direction that was under the authority of the Popular Republic of Romania's Minister of Naval and Air Transport. The seizure was made in order to recover some loans accorded by Italy in 1915 and 1922 to the former European Danube Commission, loans that were later annulated in base of the Danube Navigation Convention from April 1948, matter resolved later in a trial.

Italy retaliated to the closure of their Consulates by closing, in 1949, the Romanian General Consulate in Milan and other honorifically ones in various Italian cities.

Unfortunately, not only the political, diplomatic and economic relations were affected by this reorientation policy of this to former friend countries. The cultural ones suffered also as the Bucharest government decided to denounce unilaterally in 1950 the Romanian-Italian cultural agreement. And as if that was not enough, the Romanian authorities decided to close the Italian Cultural Institute in Bucharest. That was a very inappropriate decision that affected on a long term the Romanian-Italian relations. In past, the cultural relations between Romanian and Italy were the foundation of their friendship and collaboration. For example, in 1860 upon a Romanian request, the Italian government

¹ *Ibidem.*

² *Ibidem.*

sent Carlo Pierrerati from the Turin Museum of Zoology to help organize and lead the Museum of Natural History in Bucharest¹.

As a result of the Romanian actions, the Italian diplomacy protested against the unilaterally denouncement of the bilaterally agreement and decided to stop the Romanian Legation in Rome to print its Press Bulletin and also closed the activity of the Romanian School in Rome and the one of the “Nicolae Iorga” House in Venice, in June 1950.

Unfortunately, we can see that a “cold war” between two former friend states started after the end of the Second World War as a result of their political and ideological reorientation. In appearance it was only Romania’s fault. It is true, the Bucharest authorities started this “unproductive game”, but we must look more into the matter, more profound to see that it was the “strategic” decision of the western powers that threw Romania under the soviet influence and that so former friends and allies became feared enemies.

Continuing this “war of fools” the Romanian authorities arrested for spying activities, in 1951, a high functionary of the Italian Legation in Bucharest, Eraldo Pintori, and also its chaplain, the priest Clemente Gatti.

In response to these actions, Italian authorities arrested in May 1951 the driver of Romanian Legation in Rome and release him after 3 months. As expected, the Italian press started a tremendous campaign against the Popular Republic of Romania accusing Bucharest of false allegations against the two Italian diplomats and that their condemnation was just a cheap show without any real foundation.

In the occasion of the reception organized by the Romanian Legation in Rome on the 23rd of August 1951, the Italian diplomacy not only that did not attend to the ceremonies, the Italian Foreign Minister appealed to all diplomats present in Rome and all local institutions to boycott the event.

Between 1948 and 1952 the actions of abuse of the Romanian authorities against Italian citizens were frequent and unfair. They were arrested, expelled or imposed the house arrest. All the interventions of the Italian Legation in Bucharest or of the Italian Foreign Minister remained without response from the Romanian authorities.

As a result of the massive layoffs of the Italian citizens in 1951-1952 and their repatriation, the Italian press started a massive and violent attack against Romanian authorities for the expulsion of the Italian citizens.

Starting 1952, we can observe an improvement of the Romanian-Italian relations as the Bucharest authorities decided to release the priest Clemente Gatti. Both government start talking in order to resolve some sensitive issues like the release of the Italian “spy” Eraldo Pintori who was condemned in 1951 to forced labor for life, the matter of the building of the Romanian Academy in Rome, or an agreement that would guarantee each country that its belongings will not be seized by the other one in the account of some private individual or company debts².

The Romanian authorities wanted to recover the APIR stocks seized by the Italian authorities in 1949 and that their vessels could dock in Italian harbors without being threaten to be seized.

¹ A.M.A.E., fond arhiva istorică, vol. IV, dosar nr. 46/1860, ff. 26-28.

² Idem, fond Italia, Problema 220/1956, ff. 19-25.

The Italian authorities agreed to have these discussions that took place in 1952 and they came with some proposals at the end of the year, proposals that were not answered by the Romanian authorities until the summer of 1954 when, the discussions were resumed. The agreement was signed in 1955 after the release of Eraldo Pintori. The stocks of the APIR Company, property of the Romanian government, were sold in Italy while the building of the Romanian Academy in Rome remained closed in custody of the Romanian Legation in the Italian capital. They also agreed to respect each other belongings on foreign soils.

If the beginning of year 1955 saw some improvement in the Romanian-Italian relations, as the new totalitarian regime in Bucharest sought to consolidate its position, started to accuse the Italian government of supporting the fugitive *legionnaires* like Constantin Drăgan, Octavian Roșu, priests like A. Tăutu, Cosma etc., and ex romanian teachers like Iroaie, Isopescu etc.

At the beginning of 1956, during the Conference on *Unionists in exile outside the Iron Curtain*, held in Rome, the Undersecretary of the Italian Labor Minister, Umberto Delle Fave, saluted the foreign delegates saying that *he wishes them to return to their fee countries as soon as possible*. That, of course, irritated the Romanian authorities witch saw this as an encouragement to the Romanian exiled *legionnaires* as Gherasim. The Romanian regime accused also the Italian media, especially the radio of calumnies and rough interpretations of the situation in the Peoples Republic of Romania.

Nevertheless, after resolving their main litigious problems, at the beginning of 1955, the bilateral relations between Romania and Italy entered on a more normal way.

In July 1955, the Presidium of the National Assembly of the Peoples Republic of Romania invited the Italian Parliament to send a delegation to visit the country. The Italian inter-parliamentary delegation formally accepted the proposal, but until the end of the year 1956, they did not decided on the details.

The Romanian delegates participated to many important political, cultural and scientific international manifestations held in Italy such as the session of the Inter-parliamentary Union, World Congress of Mayors, World Congress of History, The Romanic Studies Congress etc.

After a long discussion between the Italian Minister in Bucharest with the Romanian prime-minister, Chivu Stoica, in October 1955, a delegation of Romanian specialists in cellulose left for Italy between 20 of February and 2 of March 1956 to visit various research institutes and factories that manufactured cellulose by processing reed, wheat straws etc. and other factories involved in the process.

Upon the invitation of the Italian President of the Milano's Fair, a delegation led by the Romanian Foreign Commerce visited the Fair where products of the Romanian companies like Prolexport and Cardimex were exposed¹. The Romanian delegation visited important industrial facilities like Fiat, Snia Viscosa etc. and had some talks about possible future economical exchanges.

From the economical point of view, the relations between Romania and Italy were based on the Commercial Agreement from 30 November 1950 that was prolonged in 1955 for another year.

¹ *Ibidem*.

The preconized value of the commercial exchanges between the two countries was never reached but in 1955 there was a considerable growth of those exchanges regarding 1954 with over 153% in exports and 240% in imports.

The main imported materials were raw textile materials, chemicals and citrus, while the main exported materials were naphtha, corn, timber, food or glass.

From the cultural point of view, after the denunciation of the Cultural agreement in 1950 we did not have any cultural relations between Romanian and Italy. Although from 1954 the cultural actions sustained by the “Friendship Association between Romania and Italy” were numerous. Activities like theater plays, festivals, conferences, publication of some literary works, symphonic concerts etc. were all in favor to popularize the Romanian culture in Italy¹.

On the other hand, in Romania were commemorated great Italian artists like Michelangelo, Torquato Tasso, painting expositions were held in Bucharest and also concerts, spectacles or the Italian movie week.

An exposition of Romanian popular art was opened in 1955 and many other cultural events were organized by the “Friendship Association between Romania and Italy”.

Other technological and scientific exchanges took place between specialist from Romania and Italy in 1955.

In conclusion, after the end of the Second World War, the first years were characterized by the same friendly approach as before the war. Starting with the end of the fourth decade of the 20th century the bilateral relations between Romania and Italy became very tense as the Romanian part started a witch-hunt against all Italians and their belongings on the Romanian soil.

From 1955 the cultural and economical relations between Romania and Italy started to ameliorate as the Romanian authorities realized that a more relaxed relations with an old ally is in their benefit. As the economic and cultural relations became more and more straightened, the diplomatic ones came to a fragile normality.

After the Second World War until 1956, the Romanian-Italian relations started on a descendent path only to come to a normalized situation mostly at a cultural and economic level.

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¹ *Ibidem.*

² *Ibidem.*

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