

FROM AMITY TO ENMITY AND BACK. ROMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA FROM 1948 TO 1956

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Romania and Yugoslavia developed constructive relations during the interwar period, given their mutual security interests. The outburst of World War II had separated the two countries due to their different options of foreign policy. The end of the war seemed to have left no conflicted issues between the two countries and the situation apparently justified expectations of a fruitful re-engagement of positive relations.

The instauration of Communist regimes in the Central and East European countries determined a different evolution in the mutual relations. Under Soviet occupation and with a regime closely subordinated to Moscow, Romania had lost the freedom to elaborate its foreign policy according to its security interests. Romania's foreign policy became completely aligned to Moscow, serving the Soviet interests in foreign affairs. This study will describe the main episodes of the Romanian-Yugoslav relations during 1948–1956, revealing the way in which the Soviet factor had affected the evolution of mutual relations between the above mentioned countries.

Hopes and Disillusions

The Romanian-Yugoslav relations had evolved positively after 1945. Yugoslavia was the first country with whom Romania had signed a treaty of friendship, in spite of a series of territorial claims expressed by Belgrade in front of Stalin. Whether or not the Romanian government was aware of this is still unclear. On 9 January 1945, a Yugoslav delegation led by A. Hebrang met with Stalin and Molotov in Moscow to discuss a number of territorial and military issues. On that occasion, Hebrang expressed Yugoslavia's special interest in some Romanian territories such as the Banat region with Timișoara and the town of Reșița with the surrounding area. Hebrang considered a correction of border to be necessary so that his country could benefit from the metal works in the area. Stalin did not encourage such claims and the issue was subsequently forgotten¹.

From 1945 to 1947, the Romanian-Yugoslav bilateral relations developed in an ascendant manner without any territorial controversy. The first Commercial Agreement between the two parties was signed on 11 December 1945 and was prolonged until 31 March 1948. The percentage of the exchanges with Yugoslavia

¹ Galina Murashko, Albina Noskova, *Stalin and the National-Territorial Controversies in Eastern Europe*, in "Cold War History," vol. I, 2001, no. 3, pp. 164-165.

in the Romanian foreign trade was quite low, no more than 0.9% in 1945 and slowly climbing to 2.5% in 1946, fluctuating to 1.9% in 1947 and then back up again to 2.4% in 1948. The largest commercial exchanges took place in 1948, with imports of 2.5 million USD and exports of 4.2 million USD². The later development of exchanges was visibly affected by the Soviet-Yugoslav schism.

The Soviet-Yugoslav schism was caused by reasons of power. The Soviet control over Yugoslavia was almost inexistent because Tito had gained and consolidated his position in power without any Soviet support, during the anti-German resistance. Moreover, Tito did not wish to be in any way controlled by Stalin or the Soviet Union. This situation was a defiance of the Soviet control in Central and South-Eastern Europe, which Stalin could not tolerate. Tito and his group saw no contradiction between their patriotism on the one hand, and their allegiance to Moscow on the other. Stalin could not accept this, the reconciliation of patriotism with the Soviet interpretation of internationalism was only possible in his perception under a complete Soviet control. The Soviet-Yugoslav schism was therefore a struggle for power, as it has been concluded by political and academic studies decades ago³. The relations between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the other Communist Parties (CP) were arranged according to considerations of power in which ideology was secondary. It had great importance as factor of unity and solidarity, but it only came in second⁴. The instauration of political uniformity among the Soviet satellites, by Moscow, met an obstacle in Yugoslavia and a compromise with Tito on this issue would have ruined the Soviet prestige in Eastern Europe. Therefore, Stalin not only pursued Tito's removal, but also wanted to turn the latter into an example for other Communist leaders in the area, willing to claim independence from Moscow.

Ideologically, the dispute was a re-enactment of the disputes in the 1920s, regarding the future of the Bolshevik revolution. Tito supported and promoted some of Trotsky's ideas regarding the bureaucratization of the party which had led to a loss of its revolutionary character. Tito accused Moscow that behind the proletarian internationalism, the Soviet imperialism was hiding. Rejecting the Cominform critique could be translated as a rejection of the Soviet domination. Practically, the Yugoslavs were displeased with what they called an "exploitation policy" organized by the USSR through prices and Soviet-Yugoslav mixed companies. Their stand was that the misunderstandings became acute only when

² Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (hereafter: ANIC), fund CAER, file no. 1/1956. Note MCE/20.06.1956, ff. 210-211.

³ Adam Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform*, Cambridge, 1952, p. 136.

⁴ Roy Macridis, *Stalinism and the Meaning of Titoism*, in "World Politics," vol. IV, January 1952, no. 2, p. 219.

the Yugoslavs put up a resistance to this policy, refusing to accept a metropolitan-colonial relationship⁵.

Initially, such accusations did not surface because Belgrade was keen on conciliation and positive resolution of all misunderstandings, given the fact that the emerging Cold War offered great reasons for insecurity, including for Yugoslavia. They only counterattacked in 1949, when it had become obvious that the chances for reconciliation were long lost. The main principles of the Yugoslav critique of the USSR regarded Moscow's relations with the "peoples' democracies": the unequal character of the relations among Socialist countries, the non-Marxist position of the leader within the party, the ideological pursuit of Russian nationalism, the subordination of the "peoples' democracies," the policy of spheres of influence. Their conclusion was that Stalinism is a deviation from Marxist-Leninism which has to be fought with energy. The source of all evils, in Yugoslav interpretation, was the bureaucracy which had allegedly confiscated the revolution and gained control over the party. It was the same argument that Trotsky used against Stalin, years before⁶. The essence of Tito's critique, based on the Soviet-Yugoslav experience, was the issue of national independence and the sovereignty of the state in building Socialism. By rebutting the Bolshevik model of Socialist construction as the unique model, Tito implicitly raised the question whether or not Socialism is compatible with national independence⁷.

The factor which catalyzed the enmities was the plan for a Balkan Federation set up by Tito and the Bulgarian leader Dimitrov. They promoted their project without consulting Moscow first. The Soviet Union protested against the precipitated announcement of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav treaty of friendship, intended as a preliminary step towards the Federation. On 10 February 1948, Stalin met with both Tito and Dimitrov and criticized them for signing the treaty without consulting Moscow first. Stalin also expressed his disagreement regarding the Balkan Federation project which he considered a mistake. Stalin criticized Yugoslavia's policy towards Albania, as well. Tito planned to include Albania in the Federation by incorporating it in Yugoslavia⁸. This episode illustrated the Kremlin's desire to have a strict control upon the foreign initiatives of other Communist parties and regimes.

The most important cause for the support granted to Tito by the Yugoslav Communists was the understanding of the negative consequences which Tito's removal might have had for all of them, as well as for the party. Tito's removal

⁵ Milan Bartos, *Jugoslavia's Struggle for Equality*, in "Foreign Affairs," April 1950, p. 433.

⁶ Roy Macridis, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

⁸ Galina Muraško, *Represiunile politice în țările Europei de Est la sfârșitul anilor 40: conducerea sovietică și nomenclatura națională de partid și de stat*, in "Analele Sighet," vol. 6, 1998, pp. 342-343.

from power would have certainly involved the purge of all those close to him and the complete subordination of the country to Moscow, a prospect favored by nobody⁹. The first Soviet attempt to infiltrate into Tito's entourage was their official request to the Yugoslav leader to remove two of his collaborators, Velebit and Leontic, two Yugoslav diplomats with a lot of experience in the West. Moscow considered them to be unreliable and asked for their dismissal as spies. Moscow did not have any agent near Tito or his group, in high positions of state or party. Sreten Zhujovic, Minister of Finance, was very close to the Kremlin, but his top position did not last long. At the Central Committee Plenary meeting in April 1948 he was removed from his position and arrested a few days later. He shared his fate with Andrija Hebrang, arrested in January 1948, accused of having attempted to separate Croatia from Yugoslavia. It became obvious that at the beginning of 1948, Tito's position in the party leadership had consolidated¹⁰.

The Romanian Communists Caught in the Middle

The Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) received the text of Stalin's note of 27 March 1948 addressed to Tito, just as every other Communist leadership from Central and Eastern Europe did. This way, Moscow warned the local Communist elites of its intentions regarding Yugoslavia. The note explained the withdrawal of Soviet councilors from Yugoslavia as if it was requested by various institutions from Yugoslavia which argued that the councilors were useless. The Soviet note formulates three causes for Moscow's withdrawal from Belgrade: first, the positions of some top party members in Yugoslavia who denigrated the USSR speaking about Soviet imperialism and Russian nationalism; second, the domestic situation of the Yugoslav party where there allegedly was no inner democracy; and third, the presence of Velebit, accused of being a spy, in the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry¹¹.

In another explanatory note, Stalin describes the Soviet attitude as resulting from the "unjust" allegations spread by the Yugoslav leaders in regard to the USSR¹². The conflict, which was in its nature bilateral, became multilateral, since Moscow placed it at party, and not state level. This implied the involvement of the Cominform. It was a test of solidarity and loyalty for all "peoples' democracies," the first of this kind, which would determine, by means of consequence, a better homogenization of the "Socialist camp." The Politburo of the RWP was called upon on 22 April 1948 to discuss the conflict which intervened between the Yugoslav CP and the CPSU. The decision of the RWP Politburo condemned the

⁹ Adam Ulam, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

¹¹ ANIC, fund CC al PCR – SRE, file no. 28/1948, ff. 24-27.

¹² *Ibidem*, f. 20.

Yugoslavs for the fissure they caused in the block to the benefit of the “class enemies.” The Romanian leadership rejected the Yugoslav accusations by insisting on their favorable experience in collaborating with the Soviet Union¹³. At the same time, in order to avoid similar “unhealthy manifestations” within the RWP, the Politburo also decided to begin a campaign of verification among its members so that “class enemies” infiltrated in the party could be removed¹⁴.

The Communist parties in all satellite countries shared their opinions and impressions, because Stalin wanted the Titoist heresy to be a subject of “educative” debate among Communists. For example, the Communist party in Hungary sent a copy of its decision regarding this matter to their Romanian counterparts. The Hungarian decision was impregnated with the same self-critical tone and the commitment to verify the social origins of its members. The Yugoslav accusations were rejected in the same manner¹⁵.

The development of the Romanian-Yugoslav relations in the years to follow was suspended and the press in Romania launched itself in a loud campaign against the “Titoist deviation,” just as the Cominform newspaper did. The Romanian party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was named responsible for delivering the “unmasking” speech at the Cominform meeting in 1948. Researcher Lavinia Betea considers that the arrest of former top member Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu in the summer of 1948 is directly connected with the beginning of the anti-Titoist campaign¹⁶. Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu had already been removed from all his state and party positions and his arrest at that time seems unjustified given the fact that his criminal prosecution began much later.

In this troubled context, the Yugoslav government addressed a note of protest to the Romanian government accusing it of several issues: the unfriendly attitude, the violation of the Cultural Convention, and the harassment of Serbian peasants living near the border. The Politburo discussed the note on 1 September and decided to reject it¹⁷. A note was handed to the Yugoslav *chargé d'affaires* on 9 September which consisted in a firm dismissal of all the allegations of the Yugoslav government, characterized as calumnious and false. The note mentioned that in the Romanian government’s opinion, the Yugoslav attitude was determined by “Imperialist pressures”¹⁸.

In September 1948 the Romanian government decided to denounce the Commercial Agreement existing between Romania and Yugoslavia since 1945.

¹³ Ibidem, file no. 31/1948, ff. 3-4.

¹⁴ Ibidem, f. 5.

¹⁵ Ibidem, ff. 8-10.

¹⁶ Lavinia Betea, *Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. Moartea unui lider comunist*, București, 2006, p. 192.

¹⁷ *Stenogramele ședințelor Biroului Politic al Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, vol. I 1948, București, 2002, p. 159.

¹⁸ “Probleme Externe,” September 1948, no. 5, pp. 58-60.

Ana Pauker, Minister of Foreign Affairs, explained on this occasion that the mutual trade was not in Romania's advantage since the prices for Yugoslav merchandises were very high and most of the exchanges were Yugoslav imports from Romania, concluding that the Agreement only brought benefits to the Yugoslav part¹⁹. Denouncing the Agreement evidently had a demonstrative character, given the fact that it would have expired anyway at the end of the year.

After the establishment of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid, the Yugoslav government sent more notes of protest to all the "peoples' democracies," including Romania, on 1 February 1949. The note affirmed that not inviting Yugoslavia to participate was an unfriendly gesture, part of the calumnious campaign undertaken by Romania against the Yugoslav leadership. Moreover, the note criticized the nature of the relations between the USSR and the "peoples' democracies" for being organized in such a manner as to permit Moscow to economically exploit the East European countries. The Romanian government responded through its ambassador in Belgrade, Teodor Rudenco, on 17 February. The response rejected once again the criticism and accused the allegedly false manner in which the Yugoslav government described Romania's relations with the USSR. Also, it was denied that Romania was involved in a campaign against the Yugoslav leadership²⁰. Both the tone and the content were very similar to those used in the Soviet notes addressed to Yugoslavia.

Most of the "peoples' democracies" had commercial exchanges with Yugoslavia that kept on going even after the schism. The problem was discussed at the CMEA meeting in April 1949. The decision was made for all the "peoples' democracies" to suspend their commercial exchanges with Yugoslavia. The decision, similar in content to a real embargo, was explained as a necessary measure resulting from the "inimical policy" of the Yugoslav government. CMEA demanded from all its member countries to stop delivering merchandises to Yugoslavia in spite of all existing Trade Agreements and to suspend any credit to this country. The priority was to stop delivering armament, ammunition, technological assistance and industrial equipment²¹. Of course, Stalin's wish was to suffocate Yugoslavia economically.

On November 1949, the Cominform met again in Budapest to discuss the international situation and decided to intensify the struggle against the "Yugoslav deviation." The Cominform adopted a resolution calling upon all Communist parties to increase their fight against the "traitor" Yugoslav leaders and at the same time to redouble their vigilance in order to avoid "Titoist" deviations within their

¹⁹ *Stenogramele ședințelor Biroului Politic ...*, vol. I, p. 207.

²⁰ "Scântea," 17 February 1949, no. 1353.

²¹ ANIC, fund CAER, file no. 1/1949, f. 10.

own ranks²². The anti-Titoist campaign was becoming rather hysterical from this point on, judging by the tone of the resolution and the propaganda which surrounded it. The application of the resolution was discussed in the Cominform Secretariat on February 1950, in a meeting with Gheorghiu-Dej, Pauker and Chișinevschi from the RWP and Suslov, Mitin and Gregorian from the CPSU. On this occasion, Gheorghiu-Dej presented the verification measures undertaken in the party and their results. At the same time, Gheorghiu-Dej acknowledged self-critically that the party did not have a strategy of concrete measures for the Romanian-Yugoslav border. In those areas, he remembered, the Yugoslavs conducted chauvinistic propaganda during the war, relying on bourgeois elements among the Serbian and Croatian population²³.

The Secretariat adopted several measures meant to increase the propagandistic pressure on the Yugoslav leadership. This involved the spread of anti-Titoist materials in Yugoslavia, through the CPs in the neighboring countries. The debates mentioned that Greece must be excluded from this responsibility and that Bulgaria and Hungary have had problems before in completing such assignments. The Secretariat of the Cominform decided that the responsibility can be assumed even by those countries without direct connection to Yugoslavia, by hiding propagandistic materials in the merchandises exported to this country. The ultimate purpose, as stated at the meeting, was to isolate the Yugoslav leaders and to put the country under a genuine propagandistic siege²⁴.

The RWP applied such measures in Romania with great zeal. On June 1948, following a detailed directive from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the authorities began the deportation of the Serbian population at the Romanian-Yugoslav border to Bărăgan. The Serbian communities at the Romanian-Yugoslav border were considered politically unreliable mainly because of their vulnerability to Titoist propaganda. In 1951, tens of thousands of Serbian families were deported from the villages near the border to much "safer" destinations, in Bărăgan or elsewhere²⁵. The *Securitate* closely monitored the correspondence received by Serbian or Croatian citizens in order to discover Titoist propaganda and they often did, sent from abroad, from countries like Italy. At party level, measures had been employed to educate and prepare activists specialized on the Titoist issue, able to organize propaganda and agitation activities in places such as the Yugoslav border or the Serbian communities²⁶. Other forms of propaganda were the film caravans

²² "Probleme Externe," December 1949, no. 12, pp. 93-94.

²³ ANIC, fund CC al PCR – SRE, file no. 28/1950.

²⁴ Ibidem, f. 42.

²⁵ Ion Bălan, *Regimul concentraționar din România 1945–1964*, București, 2000, pp. 137-139.

²⁶ *România. Viața politică în documente 1950*, București, 2002, p. 73: "Notă privind reținerea corespondenței".

traveling from village to village in areas populated by Serbians, anti-Titoist brochures published in Serbian, radio broadcasts in the Serbian language. All people known to have Titoist sympathies were purged from state institutions, party organizations and even from collective farms²⁷.

The public trials of Stalinist model served as a useful method of “educating” the public opinion in issues of Titoism. From 1 to 3 August 1950 a trial took place in Bucharest, in which a group of “spies and traitors in the service of the Fascist clique of Tito” was brought in front of the Military Court. The charges referred to an alleged espionage activity organized by the Yugoslav State Security in Romania with the purpose of annexing the Banat to Yugoslavia. To achieve that, the charges asserted, the Service developed close relations with reactionary and extreme-rightist elements from Romania, encouraged Serbian chauvinism and even sent agents to Romania through the Yugoslav Embassy in Bucharest. Their purpose was to denigrate the RWP and to sabotage the construction of socialism, the prosecutors claimed. Among the embassy employees brought on trial there were Nicola Medici and Boško Latsici. The Court pronounced three death sentences, three more of forced labor for life and three sentences of 25 years of forced labor²⁸.

In combating Titoism, an important role was played by the so-called “anti-Titoist revolutionaries.” They were Yugoslav citizens or Romanian citizens of Serbian origin who willingly joined the anti-Titoist campaign. The Grand National Assembly voted a motion on 15 April 1949 which offered to all those fighting against the “Titoist clique” the Romanian citizenship (if they were not Romanians), the right to labor and education. Three days later, the Central Committee Secretariat adopted the decision to establish an organization of the anti-Titoist Yugoslav immigrants and also a periodic publication of this organization²⁹.

It becomes obvious that in the given situation, the RWP reacted within the very narrow limits of the maneuver space offered by the Kremlin. That meant a complete assumption of the Soviet directions due to the vulnerability of the Romanian leadership. In this matter, the RWP, unlike the Polish CP did not experience any dissidence. The determinant factor for this situation was the Romanian regime’s complete absence of legitimacy and public support which increased its dependence upon the Kremlin.

²⁷ Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, 2nd ed., București, 2006, p. 117.

²⁸ Gheorghe Buzatu, Mircea Chirițoiu, *Procesul “titoiștilor”*, in “Document. Buletinul Arhivelor Militare Române,” 1999, no. 1, pp. 48-49.

²⁹ Victor Martin, *Revoluționarii iugoslavi anti-titoiști din România*, in “Argessis. Studii și Comunicări,” Seria Istorie, t. XI, 2002, pp. 434-435.

Picking up the Pieces

Stalin's death marked a complete turn-around in the Soviet policy regarding Yugoslavia. The new leadership chose to settle peacefully a series of conflicts inherited from Stalin and at the same time acknowledged the terrible strain exerted upon the population. The so-called "new course" affected not only the domestic situation in each "peoples' democracy," but also their foreign relations. The signals from Moscow towards a settlement of the Titoist issue were immediately translated into positive action by the Romanian regime.

From 1953 to 1956, the Romanian-Yugoslav state relations will evolve towards a certain degree of détente. Conventions regarding railway, postal and customs traffic were signed. Yugoslav diplomats were more and more often invited to diplomatic receptions³⁰.

The decisive moment in the reestablishment of normal relations was the appointment of Nicolae Guină as ambassador in Belgrade, on September 1954. Guină was received warmly in Yugoslavia. Chief of Protocol Bebler expressed his country's wishes for the normalization to continue. In his opinion, the exchange of ambassadors was only a formal beginning in this direction³¹. Guină stated that the Romanian government is very much interested in reengaging in commercial exchanges to which Bebler replied that his doors will always be open for the Romanian ambassador. Guină met with Tito later on, where he expressed his government's wish to develop friendly relations with Yugoslavia and Tito agreed that the Yugoslav government is interested in the same thing. Both parties made a connection between their commitment to positive future relation and the international tension which required cooperation among all Socialist states. They both agreed that friendly relations between neighboring countries in the Balkans can only contribute to the strengthening of world peace³². This neutral tone, inspired by the Soviet foreign policy discourse, was a proof of caution on both sides.

In the fall of 1954, Alexandru Drăghici, Minister of Internal Affairs, was severely criticized in a Politburo meeting because of some incidents which had occurred at the Romanian-Yugoslav border. Drăghici was accused of negligence in implementing the new RWP positions regarding Yugoslavia in the military units at the border and he was asked to make sure such incidents will not happen again³³. Further measures meant to bring the Romanian-Yugoslav relations to less

³⁰ Dan Cătănuș, *Reluarea relațiilor româno-iugoslave. Vizita lui Tito la București, 23–26 iunie 1956*, in "Arhivele Totalitarismului," 2004, nos. 3-4, p. 75.

³¹ ANIC, fund CC al PCR – SRE, file no. 28/1954, f. 3.

³² Ibidem, ff. 5-6.

³³ Ibidem – SC, file no. 123/1954, ff. 3-4.

conflicted appearances were decided in the fall of 1955, after Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade. The Politburo decided to release from prisons all Romanian or Yugoslav citizens detained for crimes related to Yugoslavia or Titoism. Regarding the Serbians deported in Bărăgan after 1949, the politburo decided that they will all have the right to return home, if they demanded so. Those who were willing to remain in Bărăgan were free to do so. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was charged with discussing with the Yugoslav Embassy in Bucharest the possibility to allow Yugoslav citizens in Romania to return home, if they so desired³⁴. Practically, these were reverse measures correcting most of the measures adopted during 1949–1953 in the opposite sense. The extreme caution vis-à-vis Yugoslavia was a consequence of the new orientations of Moscow.

The CPSU's position in what concerned the relations between the "peoples' democracies" and Yugoslavia is very interesting. On 7 July 1955, the Central Committee of the CPSU sent a letter to the CC of RWP about the Yugoslavian issue. The letter, signed by Khrushchev, established the direction in which the satellites were authorized to move and at the same time issued implicit warnings about the "dangers" of a rapprochement with Yugoslavia. Moscow wanted its satellites to come to terms with Yugoslavia, but at the same time to avoid the danger of considering Titoism a legitimate course of political action. Khrushchev praised the benefits of the reconciliation with Yugoslavia underlining the importance of overcoming differences. Such differences, as Khrushchev stated, referred not only to the past, but also to alternative ideological approaches. Khrushchev needed to make it clear that reconciliation with Tito was necessary for political reasons but that did not involve acceptance of dissidence among its satellites. He explained that, by insisting on certain shortcomings of Tito's ideological approach in his correspondence with Moscow:

"In the letter from the Central Committee of the Union of Yugoslav Communists there is no delimitation between communist parties and social-democratic parties, there is a foggy thesis regarding the need to collaborate with all forces which contribute to the development of socialism. In this matter, the Central committee of the CPSU had explained in its letter of response that our party, as well as the other communist parties, unfailingly follows the Leninist tactic of the unique front (...). In the letter from the CC of the Union of Yugoslav Communists there is a display of principles regarding the mutual relations among parties who fight for socialism and, in a dissimulated form, the Informative Bureau of the communist Parties is criticized. As you may see from this letter, norms and principles, compulsory for the mutual relations of Marxist-Leninist parties, such as:

³⁴ Ibidem, file no. 105/1955, f. 2.

coordination of actions on basis of mutual understanding, mutual aid and support, are absent. The issue of proletarian internationalism is completely evaded, although it is the most important part of the Marxist-Leninist ideology.”³⁵

In other words, Khrushchev warned the Communist leadership from its satellite countries that coordination is still necessary, even though the Yugoslavs reject the idea. By coordination, Kremlin certainly understood subordination.

The reestablishment of continuous constructive relations will have to wait until 1956, when Tito came to Bucharest in an official visit. The commercial exchanges were settled before Tito’s visit, though, and were going to increase in the following years. On 24 March 1955 a new Trade Agreement was signed, valid for one year. It was confirmed and extended on 28 December 1956, with another agreement. During 1955, when the mutual trade was reengaged, the exchanges amounted to almost 3 million USD, but it increased three times in 1956. The total value of the trade in 1956 was 11 million USD³⁶. The positive evolutions also lead to a regularization of old financial issues. On 28 December 1956, at the same time with the Trade Agreement, a Financial Protocol was signed between the two parties. Its purpose was to clear the mutual debts occurred after 9 May 1945. For the period 1945–1947, the balance of payments indicated a positive sold for Yugoslavia of about 1 million USD. It was agreed that the debt will be paid in four consecutive rates during 1956–1957³⁷. Another chapter that needed settlement was the pretension for compensation for the Yugoslav citizens who were forced to leave the country after 1948 and who lost proprieties or assets because of that. The total sum required as compensation amounted to about 30 million lei³⁸.

The occasion for formal reconciliation was given by Tito’s visit to Moscow, in May-June 1956. On 17 May, the Romanian ambassador in Belgrade, Radu Comşa announced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Tito decided to travel to Moscow by train, transiting the Romanian territory. Given the circumstances, he decided to make a stop in Bucharest to greet the Romanian leadership. That’s when it became clear for Gheorghiu-Dej that Tito did not want him removed, as it happened with the Hungarian leader Rakosi. The meeting was carefully prepared and proved to be successful. Gheorghiu-Dej met Tito at the Bucharest train station on 31 May 1955, where they discussed for more than one hour³⁹. It was decided that Tito will make an official visit to Romania, on 23–26 June 1956.

Tito’s visit in Romania was well prepared by the RWP leadership as a large demonstration of affinity and friendship, meant to impress the Yugoslav

³⁵ Ibidem – SRE, file no. 62/1955, f. 2.

³⁶ Idem, fund CAER, file no. 1/1956, ff. 210-211: Note from MCE/20.06.1956.

³⁷ Ibidem, f. 187.

³⁸ Ibidem, f. 189.

³⁹ Dan Cătănuş, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

delegation. The visit included two high-level meetings between Tito and Gheorghiu-Dej, a trip to the industrial area of Ploiești, and an excursion to Snagov. The results were positive, although certain issues caused debate. At first, the Romanian delegation insisted for two final statements, one regarding state relations and the other regarding party relations. The Yugoslavs disagreed with the idea, accepting only a governmental statement. After negotiations, it was agreed upon a governmental declaration and a party communiqué. During the elaboration of the party communiqué, some of Khrushchev's warnings were confirmed. The Romanian project mentioned the two parties' willingness to develop cooperation in what regards the construction of Socialism on Marxist-Leninist bases, but Kardelj opposed. His main argument was that many socialist forces in the world do not follow Marxist-Leninist principles and including that passage would make the communiqué limited. Also, Kardelj argues, it would imply that Yugoslavia did not follow a Marxist-Leninist path of Socialist construction until then, which, he insisted, was not true. It is obvious that the Yugoslavs were not willing to accept in any form the Stalinist criticism and were very cautious about that⁴⁰. Also, they were probably interested to explore how far the Romanians were willing to go with the reconciliation. Tito inquired about the Romanian plans for a hydro-electric plant at the Iron Gates: were the Romanians willing to develop a bilateral or multilateral project? Multilateral could have meant involvement from Bulgaria or maybe even the USSR. The Romanian officials responded that they see it as a bilateral project, which pleased Tito⁴¹.

At the end of the visit, the two leaders signed a Common Statement declaring their determination to positively solve all pending issues between their countries: the project for the Iron Gates electric plant, cultural collaboration, commercial exchanges, etc. The Yugoslav officials were much more reserved in their statements compared to their Romanian counterparts. According to Tito, the process of normalization was still continuing, but not finished yet. Consequently, Tito refused to sign a statement at party level, accepting only a communiqué regarding their party relations. On his way back, Tito made a stop in Timișoara where he addressed the Serbian population, stating that the political problems are now solved and that the country they live in is Yugoslavia's friend⁴². The reconciliation with Tito was a step forward for Gheorghiu-Dej in his efforts to adapt to the new international situation resulting from Stalin's death.

After Tito's visit to Bucharest, the economic relations between Romania and Yugoslavia developed much faster. The Commercial Agreement already existing

⁴⁰ ANIC, fund CC al PCR – SC, file no. 71/1956, f. 19.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, f. 17.

⁴² Dan Cătănuș, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

was completed with another agreement on technical and scientific cooperation. Romania was interested in importing especially copper and copper products, machinery and industrial products. For exportation, Romania offered oil, timber and agricultural products⁴³. For a better knowledge of the economic opportunities, a Romanian delegation visited Yugoslavia in the fall of 1956. They were taken to over 60 industrial units to familiarize themselves with the level of industrial development in Yugoslavia⁴⁴. Tito was interested in showing how well he had done without the Soviet support.

The general improvement in the mutual relations created favorable premises for approaching the hydro-technical issues concerning both parties. The political border cut the river system of the Banat area in two parts, although geographically it was one unit. Common measures for hydro-technical improvements were necessary in order to prevent the flooding of agricultural fields. In 1945, the two countries had set up a Committee to discuss and establish the technical measures considered necessary in the area. Unfortunately, the Committee had suspended its activity in 1949 and resumed it only in 1955⁴⁵. On 7 April 1955 Romania and Yugoslavia signed a Hydro-technical Agreement through which the Committee was reestablished and charged with elaborating a plan of technical measures⁴⁶. The reconciliation also determined the beginning of serious discussions regarding the Iron Gates.

The CMEA session which gathered in Berlin, in May 1956 decided to blueprint a scheme for a complex arrangement of the Lower Danube basin. Romania took initiative in what concerned the navigation and the exploitation of the hydro-electrical potential of the Iron Gates area. The Romanian government made a proposal to Yugoslavia in 1956 to call for a conference to examine the stage of research regarding this issue and to further elaborate a plan for continuing the studies about the hydro-electrical potential at the Iron Gates⁴⁷. The Yugoslav government was much more reserved though. This is why the elaboration of a project was delayed.

In conclusion, the evolution of the Romanian-Yugoslav relations from 1948 to 1956 shows the complete alignment of Romania's foreign policy to the Soviet coordinates. The existing prospects for future developments were compromised in the aftermath of World War II by the evolution of the international relations,

⁴³ ANIC, fund CAER, file no. 1/1956, ff. 107-108.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, ff. 8-9.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, ff. 174-175.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, ff. 234-236.

independent from the interests of the two countries. The conflicted situation which existed between the two countries during 1948–1953 was artificially created and had nothing to do with their interests. The political changes which occurred in Moscow following Stalin's death created new opportunities for development in the Romanian-Yugoslav relations. As demonstrated above, this did not mean that the evolution was independent, but on the contrary, the rapprochement itself was controlled by the Soviet Union.