

tween human races are not in terms of grade but of the *essence*, of the *kind*, like those between different species. The ontological unity of the genus *homo*, affirmed by the Christian tradition and by the scientific tradition (Linnaeus, Buffon), was shattered (pp. 68–72, 171–177). The polygenism advocated by the exponents of racist theories sought to suggest that the lesser species of hominids gave rise in the course of evolution to the lesser human races, while the higher ones were at the origin of the northern variety. So, a human community, a nation, had to guarantee its biological purity, because the stranger, a veritable virus, was liable to affect its immunity. Consanguinity was morphologically expressible, visible in all the gestures and features of a human group. Consequently, Germany moved towards a deculturalized and biologized history.

Biology was not the real target of the National-Socialist rhetoric, but rather the corruption of the spirit and the souls: the stake of evil throughout human history. This is visible in the deterioration of language in the Nazi newspeak, described in those years by authors like Robert Musil, Karl Kraus, or Viktor Klemperer (pp. 114–115), an analysis taken up by thinkers like Eric Voegelin. Terms like *Sonderbehandlung* or *Endlösung* were cynical euphemisms, masking the fall of humanity into the darkest abyss. Evil has no creative power but parasitically feeds on the good. The perversion of the medical profession in concentration camps was emblematic in this respect, as the author notes. From guardian angels and saviors of lives, doctors became an instrument of crime, responsible for separating the ‘cattle’ fit for work from those too weak to deserve to live. The hideous caricature of the good,

its utter distortion, reached its climax at Auschwitz-Birkenau (pp. 17–26).

Alberto Castaldini writes engagingly, managing to avoid academic pedantry in language. That is not to say that this is an undemanding work. The book forces the readers to make an intellectual effort, without discouraging them, and it is useful both to specialists in the field and to those who are new to the topic.



BOGDAN IVAȘCU

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DANIELA POPESCU

**Navigând în ape învolburate: România și Turcia în vreme de pace și de război (1934–1948)**

(Sailing in troubled waters: Romania and Turkey in times of peace and war, 1934–1948)

Foreword by VIRGILIU LEON ȚĂRĂU

Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2023

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**T**HE RECENT publication of Daniela Popescu’s book can be seen as one of the representative events on the agenda of the Cluj publishing house Mega in 2023. Originating from the author’s doctoral thesis (defended in 2020), the current work analyzes in an unprecedented manner the specific situation of Romania and Turkey in the international context of the period preceding the Second World War, then in the context of the war proper, and finally in the first postwar years. Daniela Popescu, a lecturer at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, specializing both in contemporary history and in international relations, proposes a binocular approach to the analyzed subject, combining the investigation of the regional

framework and the political history of Romanian–Turkish relations with an analysis of the international context of the period. The juxtaposition of the analytical methods specific to the two disciplines allowed the author to build an ambivalent narrative discourse, deliberately interdisciplinary, but also showing continuity when compared to the few approaches to the topic in Romanian literature, corroborated with the sectoral approaches of recent Turkish historiography.

The work follows the evolution of Romania and Turkey over three distinct sub-periods that are the subject of the three structural parts of the work: the stage of cordial appearances and the years preceding the second world conflagration (1934–1939), the years of the war (1939–1945), and then the first years after the end of the conflagration (1945–1948). For each sub-period, the international context, the coordinates (codes) of the internal and external policies of the two countries, and then the concrete terms of the Romanian–Turkish bilateral relations against the background of the mentioned coordinates are successively illustrated. Thus, the author tries and succeeds to carry out a complete schematic analysis of the investigated topic within a trinomial chrono-thematic matrix of the context–operational codes–bilateral relations type.

The evaluation of the international and regional context in which Romania and Turkey evolved in each of the aforementioned stages gave Daniela Popescu the opportunity to combine the historical method of analysis with the explanatory presentation of the researched phenomenology through the epistemic-methodological grid specific to international relations. In context, the theoretical-intel-

lectual positioning of the author during her scholarly investigation is, as Professor Virgiliu Țârău remarked in the foreword to the book, framed “predominantly in a neorealist paradigm, with small constructivist accents” (p. 10). However, given the analysis of a political-historical context in which solutions were frantically sought to safeguard peace and maintain the status quo (in the prewar years), and then for the reconfiguration of the international order (in the immediate postwar years), we believe that the recourse to the assumptions of the rationalist paradigm (the English School) would have been useful and desirable in explaining the international background against which the elements of the narrative were projected. Thus, the efforts of Romania and Turkey at the end of the 1930s to avoid as much as possible the risks of imminent belligerence could also be interpreted in the rationalistic range of the fatality of the conflict, despite the international regulatory and institutional framework (rather unstable) that sought to ensure order in Europe.

However, the author uses the international political and geopolitical framework as analytical support for decoding the main coordinates (codes) of the Romanian and Turkish interests of that time, responsible in their turn for configuring the particularities of the bilateral relations scheme, for which Daniela Popescu formulates a series of interesting and innovative interpretations. In this evaluative matrix, the current study catalogs the political and economic changes of direction that Romania had to execute amid the prewar geopolitical insecurity and given the lack of viable alternatives during and after World War II (pp. 100–101). Regarding Turkey, the author systematically identifies the sources of the

internal policies and the Turkish economic context on the basis of which Ankara set its state neutrality as the cornerstone of its international policies until 1945, based on the principles of peace and of Turkey's non-involvement in external conflicts (p. 106). The present analysis shows that these immiscible objectives of the two countries invariably marked the relations between them, which ran from a weak prewar coagulation to an immediate postwar relational deadlock that took place against the background of the emergence of the new Cold War (p. 295). Thus, Daniela Popescu uses a combination of case studies and the narration of specific episodes to paint the emaciated picture of Romanian–Turkish relations during the analyzed period. To illustrate the context of the tentative prewar bilateral relations and the events that generated them, the paper successively presents the impact of the Montreux Conference, the conditions of the minorities in Romania that generated the exodus of ethnic Turks in the 1930s, the impact on Romanian–Turkish relations of the failure of the efforts to secure the Balkans, and the adventures of the air travel to Romania of the Turkish president's foster daughter. In order to highlight the state of bilateral relations during the war, the author subtly resorts to the semiotic-diplomatic connotations of some discrete events that happened in the years 1941–1944, such as the case of some Romanian maritime ships that were refugees in the port of Istanbul, which indicated that Germany was not planning an aggression against Turkey (p. 243). The diluted postwar Romanian–Turkish relationship is also presented through a case study that evokes the repressive surveillance by the

new pro-Soviet authorities in Bucharest of the ties between the Turkish minority in Romania and the Turkish government. Another case study presented by the author and regarding the immediate postwar years refers to the state of mind in the Romanian army in those years (p. 273), a subject that has nothing to do with the topic of Romanian–Turkish relations, but which can still be accepted in the economy of the work as it highlights the socio-political situation in the Romanian environment against the background of which the break with the Western world, including Turkey, took place.

Drawing on an extensive range of diplomatic and national security documentation sources and on the Romanian, Turkish and Western historiographical literature, the young historian from Bucharest managed to analyze in an original way the winding roadmap of Romanian–Turkish relations in a period marked by acute crises and tensions in the European and regional hinterland. In this evaluative framework, the main results of the analysis highlight the causal relationship between the international political context and the specific approaches of the Romanian–Turkish bilateral relations in the crisis situations of the analyzed period, as well as the immediate postwar geopolitical framework that marked the (non) Romanian–Turkish diplomatic relationship after 1945. At the same time, in keeping with the rigors of the academic approach, the language used in the analysis is itself a consistent auxiliary tool of the investigation, being balanced and well adapted to the addressed topic, even with some aesthetic-literary overtones, which makes the book pleasant and accessible both to specialists and to a cul-

tured readership coming from related intellectual fields, while still lacking a general addressability for the uninitiated public.

The conclusions emphasize the inconsistency of Romanian–Turkish relations throughout the analyzed period (and sub-periods), a situation ascribed to the context and to the influence of the international agenda. The author finds that, if in the interwar era both Turkey and Romania opted for a similar policy of alliances at the European and regional level, which catalyzed a certain rapprochement, after World War II “there was no renewal of Romanian–Turkish relations, but an even greater distance between them, leaving the Iron Curtain to envelop the Bucharest–Ankara communication” (p. 337).

The historiographical relevance of this book resides not only in the definite added value that it brings to the Romanian academic approach to the analyzed topic, but also in the diversity of perspectives that it opens up for subsequent approaches, including as a starting point for updating and contextualizing the Romanian–Turkish relations. From this point of view, Daniela Popescu’s treatise stands out as a comprehensive synthesis of the history of Romanian–Turkish relations, a robust historiographic landmark and a solid argument for future research projects on the more recent Romanian–Turkish relations.

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**CEZAR TECLEAN**