

Broken Wings: France's Position in Romania at the Beginning of the Fourth Republic

When Paris was liberated after four years of German occupation, memories of great power politics recalled the attention of the newly French political elite created in the realm of the *Résistance*. The setting up of a new policy that would build up global confidence in restored France included certain musts, such as the exclusion of former Vichy diplomats from all posts where they were still active and a realistic analysis of the potential, according to the unprecedented geopolitical energies unleashed by war, of each area or each country of interest. The relations with the major actors of the day were of paramount importance. But Eastern Europe continued to be an obvious target for the French leadership. Romania was perceived with certain hope by French diplomats. During the interwar period, Romania was part of the French collective security system; France provided at that time massive financial assistance to the country and promoted cultural exchanges at a level unrecorded by any bilateral relation Romania ever had. But the ties that had been so strong during the interwar period between France and Romania had no impact after the soviet successful offensive in Eastern Europe against Nazi Germany. French diplomacy had not only to adapt to the soviet supremacy in Eastern Europe, but also to close up impressive institutions as *Institut français des Hautes Études en Roumanie* (1948), expatriate all French teachers who held posts in undergraduate or postgraduate Romanian institutions and accept with hands tied the denunciation by the Romanian side of the French-Romanian cultural agreement. It was actually the end of the *action culturelle* which was replaced by soviet cultural policies. Technically, the French staff of the embassy had their freedom of movement limited in Romania; a special map with the administrative units of the country where the French could freely go was provided by the newly masters of the Romanian foreign policy. Ironically, the cold war's cultural policies in Romania still kept connected the country to France by the fact that Soviets accepted many cultural productions from France as long as it served their mission (leftist writings in general but also many publications which could have been ranked as against the bourgeois establishment but actually problematic from the ideological point of view). French diplomacy had also the mission to cut off the newly created ties between French Communist Party or the French Unions (controlled or not by Moscow) and leftist government from Bucharest. In fact, as long as the French embassy in Bucharest had instructions to resist the soviet and the local pressure, they had to frozen their usual activities. Reconstruction of the French-Romanian relations had to be first approved by Moscow and secondly accepted by the new Romanian elite. It came only when France accepted all changes in Romania as the road map for any future bilateral discussions.