

Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian Relations and Interactions in the 20th Century

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Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian Relations and Interactions in the 20th Century

For centuries, Serbs and Romanians have lived as neighbours and, as we know, this was not always easy in South-East Europe and the Balkans. Sharing a similar historical experience of a divided nation that was forced to live in two great empires with different religious, cultural, and civilizational identities, Serbs and Romanians developed a relationship of mutual dependency early on, which led them towards cooperation. Unlike many conflicting histories concerning relations between Balkan nations, Serbian-Romanian relations have one specific quality – constant friendship. As scholars, we know that a relationship between two neighbouring nations is rarely free of problems or challenges. However, in the case of Serbian-Romanian relations, such problems and challenges have consistently been resolved in a peaceful and amicable manner - an achievement that merits acknowledgment. These problems and challenges, arising at times from broader historical processes, mutual misunderstandings, or at times imposed from the outside, have been a subject of interest for both Serbian and Romanian historiography for decades.

Freed at last from political and ideological constraints and taking full advantage of the declassification of important fonds from the Romanian National Archives (e.g. the fonds of CC al PCR Secția Relații Externe [the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the Foreign Relations Section], vol. I-V), the Diplomatic Archives and the Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (Direcția de Informații Externe [the Foreign Intelligence Directorate] fonds and several other such resources), Romanian historiography after 1989 has shown an ever increasing interest in the foreign relations of the Romanian state throughout the 20th century. The main areas of analysis were: relations with the Great Powers (France, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy, during the interwar period, respectively the USSR and the

popular democratic states during the Cold War), Romania's participation in European and regional alliances (the League of Nations, the Little Entente, the Balkan Pact, the Comecon) and relations with neighbouring countries. The relations with Yugoslavia are equally worthy of attention, given the consistent information available and the quality of the analyses, although only a few topics have been tackled and numerous sources are still unexplored.

The works of Vasile Râmneanțu, *Istoricul relațiilor româno-iugoslave în perioada interbelică*¹ [*The History of Romanian-Yugoslav Relations during the Interwar Period*] and Dan Lazăr, *România și Iugoslavia în primul deceniu interbelic: relații politico-diplomatice (1919–1929)*² [*Romania and Yugoslavia in the First Interwar Decade: Political and Diplomatic Relations*] are notably complex works in terms of the variety of topics, despite not necessarily being of recent date. Vasile Râmneanțu's work, structured in the classical manner of studies on bilateral relations, addresses both the political issues involved in the relations between Bucharest and Belgrade and the broader context of the collaboration between the two states within the interwar regional alliances. This analysis is complemented by both the cultural perspective (exchanges in the fields of historiography, ethnography, folklore, etc., a range of issues related to Romanian and Serbian education and the evolution of the two Orthodox churches) and the economic one. On the other hand, Dan Lazăr tries to avoid, as he himself argues, a „traditionalist” approach to bilateral relations, seen as a model of co-operation in the Balkan region, depicting the relations between Bucharest and Belgrade in the interwar period as rather oscillating and constantly affected by tensions.

Inspired by political analysis models, Laura Maria Herța advances a different perspective on the relations between Romania and Serbia/Yugoslavia at the end of the 19th century and through the first half of the 20th century. In her book entitled *De la relațiile româno-sârbe la relațiile româno-iugoslave. Interpretări constructiviste*³ [*From Romanian-Serbian to Romanian-Yugoslav Relations. Constructivist Interpretations*], the author presents the changes occurring in bilateral relations from the perspective of concepts advocated by socio-constructivist authors such as Alexander Wendt. Laura Maria Herța's book aims at answering a series of questions such as: How was the transformation of Romanian-Serbian/Yugoslav relations possible and how can we define and explain these interactions in terms of the idealism-holist binomial?; How were the behavioural patterns of the two states formed?; How was it possible for the two states to actually reproduce or modify the

¹ Vasile Râmneanțu, *Istoricul relațiilor româno-iugoslave în perioada interbelică*, (Timișoara: Editura Mirton, 2007).

² Dan Lazăr, *România și Iugoslavia în primul deceniu interbelic: relații politico-diplomatice (1919–1929)*, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2009).

³ Laura Maria Herța, *De la relațiile româno-sârbe la relațiile româno-iugoslave. Interpretări constructiviste*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2012).

regional structure of the Balkans? The author's approach was further developed in greater depth in her work entitled *Construcția amenințării titoiste și impunerea modelului sovietic. Conflictul româno-iugoslav prin lentila socio-constructivistă (1948–1954)*⁴ [*The Construction of the Tito's Threat and the Imposition of the Soviet Model. The Romanian-Yugoslav Conflict from a Socio-constructivist Perspective (1948–1954)*]. In this work, the author starts by analysing the relations between the two states in the aftermath of the Second World War, pointing to the main differences in the process leading to the establishment of the communist regime in Bucharest and Belgrade as pre-conditions that played an essential part in the tense relations between the two states. The work concludes that the change in bilateral relations was not necessarily the cumulative effect of latent rivalry or pre-existing tensions, but rather the result of the Romanian communists' being fully dependent on Moscow in the context of Stalin's intransigent stance against Tito.

Two works focusing on bilateral relations in the regional context should be mentioned here as essential for the period after the Second World War, namely *România: relațiile cu vecinii în perioada războiului rece*⁵ [*Romania: Relations with Neighbouring Countries during the Cold War*], edited by Constantin Hlihor and *Frăția socialistă: politica RPR față de țările „lagărului socialist” 1948–1964*⁶ [*Socialist Brotherhood: the Policy of the Popular Republic of Romania towards the “Eastern Bloc” Countries 1948–1964*], by Cezar Stanciu.

Mihaela Iuliana Bărbieru's work, *Relații militare româno-iugoslave în perioada interbelică (1919–1939)*⁷ [*Romanian-Yugoslav Military Relations in the Interwar Period (1919–1939)*], stands out in the Romanian historiographical landscape in terms of the topic it proposes. Based on a rich and mainly new documentation in the Romanian military archives, the work presents the causes and context of the military rapprochement between the two states, the manner in which the officers of the two General Staffs managed to influence the decision-making process both concerning bilateral relations, and within the framework of the League of Nations and other regional political agreements (the Little Entente and the Balkan Pact). The author provides a broad perspective aimed at a deeper understanding of the military aspects involved in these relations, with an extensive chapter dedicated to aspects of political collaboration in the international context.

⁴ Laura Maria Herța, *Construcția amenințării titoiste și impunerea modelului sovietic. Conflictul româno-iugoslav prin lentila socio-constructivistă (1948–1954)*, (Cluj-Napoca : Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2016).

⁵ *România: relațiile cu vecinii în perioada războiului rece*, coord. Constantin Hlihor, (București: Editura Academiei Tehnice Militare, 2015).

⁶ Cezar Stanciu, *Frăția socialistă: politica RPR față de țările „lagărului socialist” 1948–1964*, (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2009).

⁷ Mihaela Iuliana Bărbieru, *Relații militare româno-iugoslave în perioada interbelică (1919–1939)*, (Craiova: Aius, 2011).

Important aspects pertaining to the relations between Romania and Serbia/Yugoslavia are discussed in various other studies included in collective volumes. Such is the case of the volume entitled *Actele simpozionului Banatul - trecut istoric și cultural*⁸ [*Documents of the Banatul Symposium – Historical and Cultural Past*], which includes studies presented at the three editions of the symposium, organized in 2001, 2002 and 2003. The volume addresses topics such as: the cultural past of the historical region of Banat, tradition and interculturality, the status of ethnic minorities, as well as the evolution of Romanian-Serbian relations. The works by Costa Roșu fall into the same category. *Scieri despre noi. Studii și cercetări. Contribuții la istoria culturală a românilor de pretutindeni*⁹ [*Writings about Us. Studies and Research. Contributions to the Cultural History of Romanians Everywhere*], focuses on the Romanian communities in Vojvodina, the Vlachs in the Timok Valley and the Aromanians in the southern Balkans. Substantial sections are dedicated to the Romanian communities in Yugoslavia, their political organization, cultural and school life, relations with local and central Serbian authorities, the construction of their own identity under the impact of the policies pursued by the authorities in Bucharest and Belgrade in other works, such as: *Românii din Banatul iugoslav între cele două războaie (1918–1941)*¹⁰ [*Romanians in the Yugoslav Banat in the Interwar Period (1918–1941)*], *Identitate și cultură. Studii privind istoria Banatului*¹¹ [*Identity and Culture. Studies on the History of Banat*], Victor Neuman (coord.), and Vlad Bejan, *Românii din Banatul sârbesc*¹² [*Romanians in the Serbian Banat*], Studis, Iași, 2010.

Studies dedicated to Romanian diplomats who worked in Belgrade are rather scarce, although the intense relations between the two countries, at least during the interwar period, would certainly require further research. The analysis of bilateral political relations has not been complemented by research dedicated to personalities who held key positions in Romanian diplomacy in the Serbian/Yugoslav capital. Such studies could answer essential questions concerning the establishment of information networks, the selection criteria in the appointment of diplomatic representatives, the personal links established between ministers/ambassadors, their impact on the decisions taken in Bucharest with regard to Yugoslavia, and so forth. Among the few works in this direction, we should mention Ioana Ecaterina Asăvoa-

⁸ *Actele simpozionului Banatul - trecut istoric și cultural*, (Timișoara, Novi Sad, Reșița: Editura Marineasa, 2005).

⁹ Costa Roșu, *Scieri despre noi. Studii și cercetări. Contribuții la istoria culturală a românilor de pretutindeni*, (Zrenianin: Institutul de Cultură al Românilor din Voivodina; Timișoara: Eurostampa, 2013).

¹⁰ Gligor Popi, *Românii din Banatul iugoslav între cele două războaie (1918–1941)*, (Timișoara: Editura de Vest, 1996).

¹¹ *Identitate și cultură. Studii privind istoria Banatului*, coord. Victor Neumann, (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2009).

¹² Vlad Bejan, *Românii din Banatul sârbesc*, (Iași: Studis, 2010).

ie's book, *Diplomatul Victor Cădere (1919–1944)*¹³ [*Diplomat Victor Cădere (1919–1944)*], which focuses on Romania's first ambassador to Belgrade, as well as the study signed by Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, *From Victoria Boulevard to Brancova Ulita. A Romanian Diplomat in Belgrade: Constantin G. Nanu (1905–1906)*,¹⁴ published in „Revue Roumaine D'Histoire”, Tome LVIII, Nos 1–4, January-December 2019.

The full accessibility provided by the Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives and especially the declassification of a file containing over 250 volumes dedicated to Serbian emigration to Romania and the monitoring by the Securitate of the Serbs' activity in Banat have allowed researchers to publish volumes of documents which, in terms of both their content and introductory studies, represent a significant contribution to the analysis of phenomena specific to the Eastern-European communist area in the early 50s. Among such volumes there are: „*Război ideologic*” în *Balcani: imaginea Iugoslaviei titoiste în anchetele Securității (1948–1951). Documente*¹⁵ [*„Ideological warfare” in the Balkans: the Image of Tito's Yugoslavia in the Investigations of the Securitate (1948–1951). Documents*] Dan Lazăr (ed.), and „*Procesul titoismului*” în *România (1950). Documente* [*„The Trial of Titoism” in Romania (1950)*]. *Documents*,¹⁶ Ionuț Nistor (ed.). This documentary restitution endeavour aimed at shedding light on the political relations between Romania and Yugoslavia, in the context of the dispute between Stalin and Tito, is also reflected in the volume by Florin Constantiniu and Adrian Pop, *Schisma roșie. România și declanșarea conflictului sovieto iugoslav (1948–1950)*¹⁷ [*The Red Schism. Romania and the Outbreak of the Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict*], Bucharest, 2007. With its very consistent and well-argued Introduction, this volume represents one of the best analyses and most useful working tools on the implications the Soviet policy had on the relations between Bucharest and Belgrade in the early stages of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict.

Essential for a good understanding of the relation between Romanian communist authorities and the Serbian minority in Banat are the works by Miodrag Milin, Andrei Milin and Țvetco Mihailov, *Sârbii din România în vremea comunismului. Arhivă sonoră și memorialul pătimirii*¹⁸ [*Serbians in*

¹³ Ioana Ecaterina Asăvoaie, *Diplomatul Victor Cădere (1919–1944)*, (Bragadiru : Editura Mi-idecărți, 2019).

¹⁴ Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, „From Victoria Boulevard to Brancova Ulita. A Romanian Diplomat in Belgrade: Constantin G. Nanu (1905–1906)”, *Romanian Journal of History*, Vol. LVIII, Issue 1 – 4, 2019, 3–13.

¹⁵ „*Război ideologic*” în *Balcani: imaginea Iugoslaviei titoiste în anchetele Securității (1948–1951). Documente*, ed. Dan Lazăr, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2016)

¹⁶ „*Procesul titoismului*” în *România (1950). Documente*, ed. Ionuț Nistor, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2016).

¹⁷ Florin Constantiniu, Adrian Pop, *Schisma roșie. România și declanșarea conflictului sovieto iugoslav (1948–1950)*, (București: Compania, 2007).

¹⁸ Miodrag Milin, Andrei Milin, Țvetco Mihailov, *Sârbii din România în vremea comunismului. Arhivă sonoră și memorialul pătimirii*, (Timișoara: Uniunea Sârbilor din România, 2011).

Romania during Communism. Sound Archives and the Memorial of Suffering], Timișoara, 2011 and Miodrag Milin, Andrei Milin, *Sârbii din România și relațiile româno-iugoslave. Studii și documente (1944–1949)*¹⁹ [*Serbs in Romania and the Romanian-Yugoslav Relations. Studies and Documents (1944–1949)*], Timișoara, 2004. These works offer not only valuable documentary contributions, but also some very coherent perspectives on the Serbs' situation in a context marked by the redefinition of Romanian-Yugoslav relations at the end of the Second World War. The political organisation of the Serbs in communist structures, the influences coming from Belgrade, the tense relations they had with the Romanian political and military authorities, but also the extremely sensitive issue of the borders in Banat, which resurfaced due to the new political and territorial organization following the end of the war, represent as many directions of investigation provided by these works.

All the above-mentioned historiographical contributions provide a solid foundation for the reconstruction of significant political-diplomatic aspects of the Romanian-Yugoslav relations. From a chronological perspective, the period following the 1960s remains under-researched, with only a limited number of studies dedicated to it. In terms of thematic coverage, further investigation is clearly needed on economic and military relations throughout the entire century. Tools such as encyclopaedias of diplomats or biographical studies of key diplomatic figures of both states are equally important, as they could contribute to a deeper understanding of this complex bilateral interaction.

Serbian historiography, although involving a smaller number of researchers compared to Romania, which is understandable given that Romania's population is roughly three times larger, has made significant strides in recent years in studying Serbian/Yugoslav–Romanian relations in the 20th century. All the new findings and analyses produced by Serbian researchers are grounded in the extensive archival resources preserved across numerous national and local archives. For researching all aspects of Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian relations in the 20th century, an indispensable resource is the State Archives of Serbia in Belgrade, which stores the materials of the Kingdom of Serbia until 1918 and the materials of Serbia as a federal unit of socialist Yugoslavia and also the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, whose holdings cover the period of the existence of the common Yugoslav state and its federal institutions. The Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia in Belgrade, which houses two principal collections, the Political and the Top Secret Archives, holds the most significant documents on Yugoslavia's foreign policy after World War II, which makes it one of the most important archival institutions. In addition, extremely important materials, especially the life and position of the Romanian minority and Vlachs in Yugoslavia, i.e. Serbia, are preserved by

¹⁹ Miodrag Milin, Andrei Milin, *Sârbii din România și relațiile româno-iugoslave. Studii și documente (1944–1949)*, (Timișoara: Universitatea „Banatului”, 2004).

the Archives of Vojvodina in Novi Sad, as well as local archives in Pančevo, Vršac, Zaječar and Požarevac. However, unlike in Romania, the possibilities for researching the materials of the security services in Serbia are significantly limited, as they are not accessible to scholars and researchers, except for the collection of the Security and Information Agency of Serbia, which is housed in the Archives of Serbia in Belgrade.

Despite these limitations, the historiographical contribution of the new generation of Serbian scholars researching Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian relations in the 20th century over the past fifteen years has been significant. These researchers are primarily affiliated with scientific and academic institutions such as the Institute for Recent History of Serbia, the Institute for Contemporary History, the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, as well as the University of Belgrade and the University of Novi Sad. Although the syntheses, monographs and shorter works of historians of the older generation such as Gligor Popi,²⁰ Milan Vanku,²¹ Branko Petranović,²² and Andrej Mitrović²³ remain indispensable, more recent studies, particularly those exploring chapters of history distinct from the Second World War, are increasingly assuming a central role in both current and future research on the complex relations between the two neighboring nations and states. Among the works published in recent years, two monographs by historian Nemanja Mitrović stand out for their exclusive focus on Yugoslav-Romanian relations. The first, *Decenija iskušenja: jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1948–1958*²⁴ [*Challenging Decade: Yugoslav-Romanian Relations 1948–1958*], published last year, offers a comprehensive analysis of the bilateral relationship during a decade marked by a sharp deterioration followed by a gradual restoration of cooperation. By emphasizing how the periods of conflict and reconciliation affected the Serbian national minority in Romania, the author traces relations evolved between the two neighboring countries across a broad spectrum, not only in politics and economics, but also in culture, the arts, science, sports, and even interfaith relations. A par-

²⁰ Gligor Popi, *Jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1918–1941* (Novi Sad: Institut za istoriju Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu, 1984).

²¹ Milan Vanku, *Mala antanta 1920–1938*, (Titovo Užice: 1969); Milan Vanku, *Srpsko-jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi kroz vekove*, (Beograd: 2005).

²² Бранко Петрановић, „Питање граница Југославије према Мађарској и Румунији и југословенских мањина у Мађарској и Румунији после Првог и Другог светског рата (историјска паралела)”, *Историјски зајиси*, XXXIX (LIX), br. 3, (1986); Branko Petranović, Sava Dautović, *Jugoslavija, velike sile i balkanske zemlje, 1945–1948. Iskustvo „narodne demokratije” kao partijske države*, (Beograd: 1994).

Andrej Mitrović, *Razgraničenje Jugoslavije sa Mađarskom i Rumunijom: 1919–1920: prilog proučavanja jugoslovenske politike na Konferenciji mira u Parizu* (Novi Sad: Institut za izučavanje istorije Vojvodine, 1975); Andrej Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira: 1919–1920* (Beograd: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Socijalističke Republike Srbije, 1969).

²⁴ Nemanja Mitrović, *Decenija iskušenja: jugoslovensko-rumunski odnosi 1948–1958*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2024).

ticularly valuable aspect of this book is its comprehensive reconstruction of Romania's image within Yugoslavia during that period. The second book, called *Тишо - Чаушеску: Јодине зближавања. Јујословенско-румунски односи 1968–1970*²⁵ [*Tito - Ceausescu: Years of Rapprochement. Yugoslav - Romanian Relations 1968–1970*] offers an insightful portrayal of the developed relations between Yugoslavia and Romania in the delicate years after the turning point of 1968. Focusing on the international positions of Yugoslavia and Romania during the Cold War and the efforts of both countries to establish their place between the opposing blocs, with varying success, the author highlights the successful construction of the hydroelectric power plant and navigation system on the Danube as the pinnacle of cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

In addition to these two books, which focus exclusively on Yugoslav-Romanian relations, two other works published in the past decade examine these bilateral relations within a broader regional context. Olivera Dragišić's book, *Комунистичко освајање власћи на Балкану 1944–1947. Румунија. Бујарска. Јујославија*²⁶ [*The Communist takeover of power in the Balkans 1944–1947. Romania. Bulgaria. Yugoslavia*] employing a comparative approach, highlights the similarities and differences in the processes through which the communist parties in Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria established a monopoly on power in the aftermath of the Second World War. The author goes beyond the cliché about the decisive and exclusive responsibility of the Soviet Union, shedding new light on the role of the Western Allies, and especially Great Britain, in this process. A somewhat older work, Vladimir Lj. Cvetković's monograph *Pogled iza gvozdene zavese. Jugoslovenska politika prema zemljama „narodne demokratije“ u susedstvu 1953–1958. godine*²⁷ [*A Look Behind the Iron Curtain. The Yugoslav Policy Towards the Neighbouring Countries of People's Democracy 1953–1958*] examines Yugoslav-Romanian relations during the period of normalization after the Tito-Stalin split within the broader context of Yugoslavia's policy toward Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary. Recognizing the crucial importance of Yugoslav-Soviet relations for the overall dynamics of the normalization of interstate relations with Eastern European countries under Soviet domination, the author aims, in the case of Yugoslav-Romanian relations, to identify the causes of the slower pace of normalization.

In addition to the aforementioned works that address Yugoslav-Romanian relations, either directly or within a broader regional and internati-

²⁵ Немања Митровић, *Тишо – Чаушеску: Јодине зближавања. Јујословенско-румунски односи 1968–1970*, (Београд: Институт за савремену историју, 2020).

²⁶ Оливера Драгишић, *Комунистичко освајање власћи на Балкану 1944–1947. Румунија. Бујарска. Јујославија*, (Београд: Институт за новију историју Србије, 2023).

²⁷ Vladimir Lj. Cvetković, *Pogled iza gvozdene zavese. Jugoslovenska politika prema zemljama „narodne demokratije“ u susedstvu 1953–1958. godine*, (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2013).

onal context, Zoran Janjetović's monograph *Konfrontacija i integracija. Nacionalne manjine u Srbiji 1944–1964*²⁸ [*Confrontation and Integration. National Minorities in Serbia 1944–1964*] is also significant as a study of shared Serbian/Yugoslav and Romanian history. The book analyzes the political and legal framework within which Yugoslav policy toward national minorities, including the Romanian minority, was formulated and implemented in Serbia as a federal unit of Yugoslavia during the first two decades of socialism. His research has shown that the desired and proclaimed policy did not materialize, and that in many cases the outcomes were counterproductive, both for the state and for the minority communities concerned. The problems of the Romanian minority in Yugoslavia, i.e. Serbia, are also addressed by Mircea Maran, author of several monographs, studies and articles on the subject, of which the most significant monographs in this regard are *Rumuni u Vojvodini: istorija, demografija, identitet Rumuna u vojvođanskim naseljima*²⁹ [*Romanians in Vojvodina: history, demographics, identity of Romanians in Vojvodina settlements*] and *Kulturne prilike kod Rumuna u Banatu: 1945–1952*³⁰ [*Cultural circumstances of the Romanians in Banat: 1945–1952*] in which the author explores the rich private life of the Romanian minority in the Serbian part of Banat, their cultural and identity reflection in a multinational environment, as well as their ways of adapting to new social and political realities.

In addition to the aforementioned monographs, Serbian historians have in recent years contributed studies to edited volumes, among which two stand out as particularly noteworthy. The first collection, *New Cultural and Political Perspectives on Serbian-Romanian Relations*,³¹ addresses a broad spectrum of topics concerning Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian relations from the 18th to the 20th century. Consistently following an interdisciplinary approach, the collection offers new insights not only into historical and diplomatic developments, but also into cultural, artistic, and religious dimensions of Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian interactions. The second collection, *Români și Sârbi în Marele Război*³² [*Romanians and Serbs in the Great War*] is dedicated exclusively to the historical experience of the Serbian and Romanian peoples during the First World War. Studies in this volume present novel insights into this historical period, examining pre-war dynamics,

²⁸ Zoran Janjetović, *Konfrontacija i integracija. Nacionalne manjine u Srbiji 1944–1964*, (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2022).

²⁹ Mirča Maran, *Rumuni u Vojvodini : istorija, demografija, identitet Rumuna u vojvođanskim naseljima*, (Zrenjanin: Zavod za kulturu vojvođanskih Rumuna, 2011).

³⁰ Mirča Maran, *Kulturne prilike kod Rumuna u Banatu: 1945–1952*, (Vršac: Viša škola strukovnih studija za obrazovanje vaspitača „Mihailo Pavlov”, 2009).

³¹ *New Cultural and Political Perspectives on Serbian-Romanian Relations*, South-East European History, Vol. 5, Edited by Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović, Jovana Kolundžija, Mircea Măran, Otilia Hedeșan, Christene D’Anca, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2023).

³² *Români și Sârbi în Marele Război*, coord. Ioan Bolovan, Momčilo Pavlović, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2018).

military collaboration, and political and diplomatic relations between Serbia and Romania during the conflict, as well as the post-war ramifications for both neighboring states.

The present volume, *Serbian/Yugoslav–Romanian Relations and Interactions in the 20th Century*, focuses on a range of subjects, personalities, and processes that significantly influenced not only the development of Serbian/Yugoslav–Romanian relations in the spheres of diplomacy, economy, and culture within a complex geopolitical context, but also the ways in which the peoples of the two neighboring countries perceived and understood one another. The result of these complex processes were mutual cross-influences that shaped both Romania and Serbia/Yugoslavia throughout the 20th century, leaving a lasting imprint on the historical experience of the peoples who have lived as neighbors for centuries. It is precisely these interactions that became the focus of a group of Serbian and Romanian historians who, by combining their efforts, expertise, and scholarly insights, produced the present collection. They examined extensive Romanian and Serbian/Yugoslav archival sources, along with a wide range of books and scholarly articles, and presented their findings in 18 papers written in English, thematically organized into three sections. The first part, *A New Beginning, the Crisis of the Versailles System and the Initial Phase of the Second World War*, covers the period from the unification of Romania and the proclamation of Yugoslavia in 1918 to the first years of the Second World War. The second part, *Yugoslav–Romanian Relations in a Divided Europe*, covers the period from 1945 to the 1990s, tracing mutual relations in the context of the Cold War in Europe and its immediate aftermath. The third section, entitled *How We Saw and Understood Each Other*, is entirely devoted to the „image of the other” in Serbian/Yugoslav–Romanian relations, with particular emphasis on the position and status of national minorities and ethnic communities.

The opening paper, which also introduces the first section comprised of five contributions, is titled „The Relations between the Serbian and Romanian Orthodox Churches 1919–1934” and is authored by Anđelija Miladinović. Examining Serbian–Romanian ecclesiastical relations, the author illustrates how the complex and contested demarcation between the two states and peoples in the Banat region after the First World War gave rise to tensions between Romania and the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, particularly in matters concerning church organization and minority education. These issues persisted even after the border demarcation was finalized in 1923, highlighting the extent to which state and church policies were interwoven in both Romania and Yugoslavia during that period. The next contribution, entitled „Establishing the Dynastic Link between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the Kingdom of Romania”, by Aleksandar Đ. Marinković, explores the political and symbolic significance of the marriage between King Alexander I of Yugoslavia and Princess Maria of Romania. This impor-

tance is reflected primarily in the fact that the dynastic marriage was intended to strengthen the ties between the Kingdom of SCS and Romania, both of which had, in the newly established „Versailles system”, similar roles as guardians of the new order, but it was also intended to alleviate the tensions caused by the compromise division of Banat. The author emphasizes the diplomatic assistance of France in the arrangement of the marriage, given that the role of this marriage fully coincided with its interests in maintaining its dominance in Europe after the end of the First World War. The third paper in this section, „Yugoslav-Romanian Relations in Bilateral and Multilateral Context 1925–1927” by Srđan Mičić, highlights key aspects of relations between Belgrade and Bucharest during the first phase of the so-called Locarno period in Europe. This was a period of intense diplomatic activity, in which bilateral relations had to be understood within the broader framework of interactions with the great powers, as well as with other states of strategic importance to both countries, such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, and Bulgaria. Within this broader diplomatic context of mid-1920s Europe, the author examines the serious crisis within the Little Entente, triggered by the foreign policy pursued by the government of General Alexandru Averescu. The next contribution, by Mile Bjelajac, entitled „The Decline of Common Security. Yugoslavia and Romania 1936–1941” analyzes Yugoslav–Romanian relations within the context of the increasingly evident and deepening crisis of the interwar European collective security system, in which both countries participated. Employing a comparative approach, the author reveals the underlying considerations that guided the strategic and tactical decisions of both governments and military leaderships. The author points out their frequent disregard for broader international developments, which, combined with misjudgments and misguided decisions, ultimately encouraged the architects of the „new order” and paved the way for a new war in Europe. And the last text in this section, entitled „Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovak Crisis of 1938”, authored by Adrian Vițalaru, addresses the same historical period of the collapse of the security system in Europe established after the First World War. Unlike the preceding contribution, this text focuses on how Romania and Yugoslavia, as members of the Little Entente, responded to the threat to Czechoslovakia’s territorial integrity, a country to which they were bound by allied commitments. The author examines how the authorities in Bucharest interpreted Belgrade’s stance during the Czechoslovak crisis, and addresses the efforts of the two states to formulate a common position through frequent diplomatic exchanges. Finally, he offers an analysis of the consequences that the decisions of the Munich Conference had on Yugoslav-Romanian relations.

The second section, comprising seven papers, opens with the article „Romanian-Yugoslav Cultural Relations in the Period 1945–1948” by Ionuț Nistor. Starting from the geographical proximity and long-standing cultural

exchanges between Serbs and Romanians, both of whom after the First World War lived as minority populations in each other's countries, the author devotes particular attention to the organization of minority schools, both in the interwar period and in the immediate aftermath of World War II. The extensive cultural cooperation prior to 1941 was disrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. After the war, now positioned within the same Soviet-dominated bloc, Yugoslavia and Romania renewed their cultural ties through the exchange of books and artists, formalized by the signing of the Convention on Cultural Cooperation. However, the ideological and political rift between Yugoslavia and the Cominform led to the cessation of cultural cooperation in 1948. The consequences of this conflict are further explored in Vladimir Lj. Cvetković's paper, „Yugoslavia, Romania and the June 28th 1948 Cominform Resolution: The First Consequences”, which aims to analyze the initial months following the outbreak of the conflict and identify its most significant effects. Before the rift, Yugoslavia and Romania had developed close relations in various fields, but these ties were abruptly severed after June 28, 1948, bringing the two states to the brink of open confrontation. By examining which interstate connections were the first to be broken, we can identify issues that, despite appearing formally resolved during the earlier, seemingly harmonious years, in reality remained contentious. Alexandru D. Aioanei's paper, „The United Kingdom and Romanian–Yugoslav Relations in the 1950s” chronologically follows the first two contributions. Drawing on previously unpublished British archival material, Aioanei's study sheds light on British perceptions of Romanian–Yugoslav relations during the 1950s, a period of ideological divergence between the two countries. Great Britain's interest in Romania and Yugoslavia was understandable, given its longstanding diplomatic and intelligence presence in both countries before and during the Second World War. After the war, continued British attention to tensions between Romania and Yugoslavia reflected the Foreign Office's ongoing activities in Southeastern Europe. Yugoslav–Romanian relations during this period are also examined in Nemanja Mitrović's study, „In the Shadow of the Moscow Declaration: Official Visit of Josip Broz Tito to Romania, June 23–26, 1956”, which demonstrates that the process of normalizing relations between the two countries was protracted and slow, lacking genuine initiative on either side, and that it largely depended on signals from the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia viewed the signing of the Moscow Declaration on June 20, 1956, as a decisive impetus to advance its policy of cooperation with Eastern European countries in Romania, on its delegation's return trip from Moscow, though strictly on the basis of the principles outlined in the declaration. Although primarily propagandistic in nature, Tito's visit to Romania had a positive impact on many aspects of Yugoslav–Romanian relations. The next contribution, „The First Appointment as Ambassador. The Beginnings of Vasile Șandru's Mandate in Belgrade (1969–

1970)” written by Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu focuses on specific aspects of the life and work of Vasile Șandru and forms part of broader efforts by historians of Romanian-Yugoslav relations to investigate and assess the role and significance of individual figures, whether from the political, diplomatic, economic, or cultural spheres, in fostering the development of bilateral relations. From this perspective, the author seeks to address questions such as the state of Romanian-Yugoslav relations in the late 1960s, the factors that influenced the appointment of Vasile Șandru as ambassador to Belgrade, and the initial objectives of his mandate. The work of Petar Dragišić, „The League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Romanian Communist Party from the mid-1980s to the fall of Ceaușescu”, takes us to the late 1980s, a time when the communist parties in both countries, which had been in power for decades, found themselves in a deep crisis. Drawing on unpublished Yugoslav archival materials, the article analyzes the relationship between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Romanian Communist Party, focusing primarily on the interactions and contacts between their highest-ranking officials. In the course of their meetings, certain similarities emerged, but numerous differences were also evident, particularly in their interpretations of the contemporary international communist movement and their views on global political and economic developments. The seventh and final paper in the second section, „Accession of Yugoslavia and Romania to the Council of Europe in the Second Half of the 20th Century: Similarities and Differences” by Ratomir Miličić, highlights many similarities between Yugoslavia and Romania in their respective approaches to the Council of Europe, from the organization’s founding in 1949 up to their eventual accession. The author identifies both internal and external factors that contributed to these similarities, the most significant being the one-party political systems in both countries, despite some notable ideological differences between Yugoslavia and Romania. Over the longer term, a key difference between the two countries in this regard lay in the European Union’s divergent attitudes toward Yugoslavia and Romania. Yugoslavia was perceived as more liberal, whereas the EU began shifting its stance toward Romania only in the late 1980s and early 1990s, following the collapse of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s communist regime.

The third section opens with Marija Milinković’s paper „A Cry of Horror Rose from Our Chests: The Romanian View of the May Coup”, which offers a vivid account of the reactions of both the Romanian authorities and the public to the deeply traumatic event of the assassination of King Aleksandar Obrenović and Queen Draga, in a coup d’état. While the reactions to this event in the capitals of the great powers have been well researched, the reactions in Romania have remained largely unknown, despite the fact that the Obrenović dynasty maintained not only familial but also extensive business ties with the neighboring country. The author offers a thorough exploration not only of the portrayal of the deposed Obrenović dynasty in the

press, but also of the representation of the newly installed Karađorđević dynasty. The next article, „The Peach – Unnoticed Symbol of the Great War in the Romanian Novel *The Game with Death* and Bulgarian Novel *The Peach Thief*” by Olivera Dragišić, analyzes the representation of the First World War in Serbia in the novels *The Game with Death* by Zaharia Stancu and *The Peach Thief* by Emilian Stanev. Both depictions in these two literary works, written during the socialist era and shortly before the fiftieth anniversary of the First World War, also served as the basis for feature film adaptations. In both, one can discern the predominance of motifs such as death, the Russian Revolution, Serbia, and the motif of the peach, the latter functioning as a symbol of life's renewal. Mircea Măran's contribution, „The Attitude of the Weekly *Graiul românesc* (Romanian Voice) from Pančevo Towards the Yugoslav Dynasty and State” examines the stance of the Romanian Party's newspaper between 1923 and 1926, a period during which the Romanian population in Banat sought to establish political organization in response to their new status as a national minority in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The owner of the weekly was a Romanian Party deputy in the National Assembly, a position that significantly influenced the newspaper's editorial policy. By analyzing news about the activities of the Romanian Party, about Romanians in Banat in general, but also news from the country and abroad, the author seeks to identify and highlight the editorial stance of the newspaper toward the Yugoslav dynasty, the state, and the position of the Romanian minority within it. The text by Dragan Bakić and Rastko Lompar „The Image of the Iron Guard in Yugoslavia and Reflections of the Crisis in Romania 1934–1941” offers insight into the attention paid in Yugoslavia, both by the authorities and the press, to the rapid rise of Corneliu Codreanu and his Iron Guard. Both the government and the public closely followed his relationship with King Carol II, whose dominant position in domestic politics threatened the fascist and revolutionary character of Codreanu's movement. The authors also point out that the conflict between the conservative and radical right, prevalent across Europe at the time, resonated in Yugoslavia as well, where it contributed to the emergence of Dimitrije Ljotić's ZBOR movement. However, this movement never attained the strength or influence of Romania's Iron Guard.

The two final papers in the third section are dedicated to the issues of national minorities and ethnic communities, as well as their significance for Yugoslav-Romanian relations. Zoran Janjetović's contribution, „An Attempt at Creating a New National Minority in North-East Serbia in the First Years after WWII”, examines the approach of the new communist authorities in Yugoslavia toward the Vlach population in the immediate postwar period, addressing a complex issue that for decades represented a point of contention and misunderstanding between Romania and Serbia/Yugoslavia. Janjetović begins with the prewar positions of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia

on the national question and reconstructs in detail the efforts of the postwar Yugoslav authorities to foster a distinct national consciousness among the Vlachs by granting them all the rights of a national minority: publishing newspapers in the Vlach language, initiating work on a Vlach grammar, publishing literary writings in the language, and establishing cultural and artistic associations. The author attributes the failure of these initiatives to several factors: the lack of interest within the Vlach community, the unrealistic nature of the state's goals, insufficient funding, and the political rupture with the Cominform in 1948. The second text on the subject of minorities, and the final contribution in the volume, is Miodrag Milin's „Toward a Fluid Identity Profile: The Serbs in Romania after WWII". In this compelling analysis, Milin explores the consequences suffered by the Serbian national minority in Romania following the Yugoslav-Cominform split, particularly due to the actions of former Yugoslav army fighters, Romanian citizens, who acted in support of Tito's Yugoslavia. As bilateral relations deteriorated, the Romanian authorities responded with open repression: arrests, restrictions on minority organizing, and ultimately deportation of large groups of minorities to the Bărăgan. These measures fostered an atmosphere of fear and insecurity among the Serbs in Romania. Although government pressure eased in the late 1950s, the long-term consequences were evident at the psychological level of individuals. Over time, this led to a tendency toward national mimicry and the formation of a „fluid identity", a transitional step on the path to assimilation.

Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian Relations and Interactions in the 20th Century is the result of collaboration between the Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade and the Faculty of History at „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iași, as well as the longstanding professional cooperation and dialogue between the two editors. It is our hope that the diverse range of topics presented to researchers and readers will not only deepen the understanding of Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian relations but also inspire new scholarly interests and research among younger generations of scholars, who will undoubtedly contribute to the ongoing development of professional dialogue between Serbian and Romanian historiographies, with the common goal of fostering scholarly and other forms of collaboration and enhancing mutual understanding between these neighbouring and friendly peoples.

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