

The French Legation in Bucharest and the “Gaullist Challenges” in the Spring of 1942

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The French Legation in Bucharest was very attentive to the oscillations of the Vichy government, the mood of the French community, and the attitude of the Romanian authorities and their relationship with the Germans in Bucharest.

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For France, the year 1942 was marked by several critical moments. One of these was the occupation of all French territory by Nazi Germany in the autumn of 1942. Even up to that point, it seems that tensions between Germany and the Vichy government had been quite high. There is a whole literature on the role and nature of the Vichy regime which I will not go into now, but it should be noted that at least during the first few years—until the return of Pierre Laval—this government presented itself and was perceived by many as the last form of French resistance against German territorial occupation.¹ From the autumn of 1940 onwards, different attitudes could be observed within the French leadership towards the French-German collaboration. Both Philippe Pé-

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tain and Pierre Laval saw the need for collaboration with the Third Reich, given the occupation of France, but Laval wanted a more active involvement of France in the new European order devised by Hitler, while Pétain wanted to limit himself to applying the terms of the armistice.² These different perspectives led to the dismissal of Laval on 13 December 1940, who would not return as head of government until April 1942.³ To give a few examples, in his New Year's speech of 1941, Marshal Pétain called for French unity around the Vichy government and declared that France remained a colonial and European power.⁴ Also at the end of 1941, Hitler probed France's position on the possibility of declaring war against United Kingdom, whether it would agree to the loss of Tunisia, Corsica and Nice, and what its attitude was to a declaration of war against Britain and the USA. After consulting several channels, in January 1942 the Führer said he would no longer negotiate with France, which "remained hostile to him."⁵ Differences between France and Germany continued on the issue, with France accepting political collaboration with Germany, but the latter wanting only military and economic advantages.⁶ A war against the United States was also inconceivable for France in view of the fact that the United States was the only major power in the United Nations coalition that attached importance to the Vichy government and not to de Gaulle's movement.⁷

What did this hostility actually mean and what exactly was the French resistance? The movement coalesced in many forms and was in a constant state of flux and change until 1944. Historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle sees the French resistance movement as a foreign policy phenomenon of that time, as the end of the armistice between France and Germany raised for many the question of the legitimacy of the Vichy government. This led to multiple reactions that gave rise to various resistance groups and philosophies.⁸ There was a resistance that emerged in the still unoccupied French territory, as well as a number of resistance groups in exile, the latter mostly subordinated to Charles de Gaulle.

The activity of the resistance groups, as well as the attempts to coagulate and strengthen all the component forces of "Free France" also led to a reaction from the Vichy authorities, which were trying to control—but also to strengthen their authority and maintain as much as possible their national strength—both the French territory and the diplomatic network abroad. As with the other diplomatic representations, the French Legation in Bucharest also became a mirror of the tensions and political movements on the French territory.⁹ It should also be noted that although relations between Romania and Germany, and respectively France and Germany, during the war were built relatively differently, as the historical friendship between Romania and France helped them overcome the critical moments of the war with mutual empathy and diplomacy. Ion Antonescu's policy and the relationship he developed with Nazi Germany was

also a model for Marshal Pétain. Thus, in January 1941, after the suppression of the legionary revolt by Antonescu, Marshal Pétain expressed his admiration for the way in which a head of state who enjoyed the confidence of the army and the people had managed to resist attempts to disorganize the state.¹⁰ For his part, Marshal Ion Antonescu understood Pétain's policy also as a form of preserving French national sovereignty, which is why, on 6 September 1940, Antonescu secretly sent an emissary to the French Embassy in Bucharest, through which he declared his attachment to France, saying that he would play in Romania the same role that Marshal Pétain played in France.¹¹ Behind these reconfigurations of French and Romanian foreign policy the state objectives were to recover national territory—in the case of France, initially through this policy of concessions towards the Third Reich, in the case of Romania, through the possibility of starting a war against the USSR, as the new main enemy.

Given this context, in this study I will analyze how the issue of the French resistance in early 1942 was reflected within the French diplomatic corps in Bucharest and how it influenced their relationship with the Romanian authorities.¹² I will begin my analysis with a brief survey of the resistance groups, as the issue of French resistance in general was a complicated one to decipher even at the time, especially during the early days of the Vichy government. I will continue with an analysis of the role and actions of the French Legion, highlighting how it complicated the understanding of the French resistance issue, and last but not least I will analyze how this issue of resistance and “Gaullism” was perceived by the French diplomatic staff in Bucharest.

The Many Facets of the French Resistance

RESISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS had been appearing since 1940, especially in northern France, one example being the Comité National de Salut Public, under the leadership of Boris Vildé and Anatole Lewitsky. The movement also published a newspaper, *Résistance*, and was in charge of issuing false papers to French people who wanted to leave the occupied zone.¹³ In November 1940 another group led by socialists was founded, which from May 1941 was called La Quatrième République. In September 1940 the organization Ceux de la Libération was founded, followed at the end of 1940 by the Organisation Nationale de la Résistance, which would become Ceux de la Résistance.¹⁴ Another well-known organization was that of the French communists, set up in October 1940 (Organisation spéciale), led by Charles Debarge. It also had specialized armed groups, with the aim of recovering weapons, protecting manifesto distributors and demonstrators and for other sabotage actions.¹⁵

There were such resistance organizations in the South as well. One of the best known was the *Vérités*, later transformed into *Combat*. In the autumn of 1942, the group's leaders asked Charles de Gaulle for help, which would come later, after they 'joined' the Gaullist group. The organization also had a newspaper entitled *Organe du Mouvement de libération française*.¹⁶ This diversity of groups also meant that there was a multitude of opinions on the idea of resistance, on the direction this movement should take, but it also fragmented the forces mustered against the German occupation. Many of these groups, as well as others like them, did not join de Gaulle's movement in large numbers, in several stages, until after November 1942. Throughout 1942, therefore, the resistance forces were still dispersed, with no common coordination to give them strength and coherence.

As for the resistance movement set up and developed by General de Gaulle in the autumn of 1941, it succeeded in bringing together only a few organizations in exile that would represent the so-called "Free France." Interestingly, de Gaulle did not initially attach much importance to the groups operating in France. This structure was supposed to complement the French popular liberation movement, regardless of the profile, political or of any other kind, of the component groups (communists, trade unionists, socialists, Catholic democrats, or secularists).¹⁷

His actions were aimed at creating a strong, cohesive resistance that could fight the Germans and take back the national territory. On 24 September 1941, the French National Committee was set up, composed of eight commissioners appointed by decree.¹⁸ In a relatively short time, the Committee organized itself as a real power center. Among the component commissariats was a National War Commissariat, which inherited most of the structure and operating methods of the former General Staff. This commissariat was joined by the Service de renseignement,¹⁹ and starting with 1 November 1941, this body began to operate under the supreme authority of General de Gaulle.²⁰ On 17 January 1942, the Service de renseignement changed its name to Bureau central de renseignement et d'action militaire (BCRAM), under the direction of a young active officer, Roger Warin.²¹ The main responsibilities of the section were to carry out the preliminary selection of volunteers and to direct them to the sections in which they fitted.²²

One organization that was at least controversial in terms of its formation and operation was the French Legion. The French Legion (*La légion française de combattants*) was created on 29 August 1940 under the leadership of Xavier Vallat, as a mass organization, with the aim of carrying out the "national revolution," modelled on the movement in Nazi Germany.²³ The Legion had its roots in the French radical right of the 1930s.²⁴ The Legion was not intended to be

a single party, but rather a single organization. However, it had a composite structure, with many of its members believing they were leading a revolution not only against the British but also against the Germans.²⁵ Although during 1941 the Legion attracted a considerable number of members, of varying political orientations but all from the right of the political spectrum, in the spring of 1942 the Legion lost its breadth. Some of the members moved on to other French resistance organizations. The Pétainist core continued within the Legion, believing that Pétain's government was the government of the French and that it should be supported to the end as a way of resisting the German authorities.²⁶

The French Legation in Bucharest and the Issue of "Gaullism"

IN JANUARY 1942, among the French colony in Bucharest, the idea arose that such a French legion would be created in Romania,²⁷ following the model of the one in unoccupied France. The idea had been launched in the French colony by Warnot, director of the Action française cement factory.²⁸ He proposed the creation of a French legion, on the model of the one existing in France at that time, as a "patriotic and political organization to support the action of French official bodies (the Legation)."²⁹ A few days later, the question was taken up again in a discussion within the Legation, seeking ways of attracting the French colony in Romania to this body.³⁰ Both among the French colony and in the discussion within the Legation, the idea was rejected, taking into account the fact that neither the Romanian nor the French legal framework allowed the creation of a French political body in a foreign state, and the different opinions on this body within the French colony in Romania would further divide the colony, which was already strained on other issues. In addition, Jacques Truelle considered it highly likely that the central directorate of the French Legion in Vichy would appoint a semi-official representative from among the colony "not to control French life here, but to keep the Legion informed of French life in Romania."³¹ Indeed the Legion's role was not clearly established, but there was an attempt by Pétain to draw the Legion to his side. Truelle's information was partly confirmed. At the beginning of February 1942, Pétain gave a speech to the Legion's national council in which he outlined some of his views on the Legion's work. In order to link the public powers with the Legion, certain members of the Legion were to take part in the consultative councils of the state, counties and communes, and would be kept informed of the work of the ministries and administrative bodies by specially authorized advisers. He saw the Legion members as representatives of the general interests, therefore, a

collaboration with them meant an involvement of the population in the process of government. His speech was well received by those present, but according to the diplomat Constantin Hiott, the Legion's role was rather limited and the organization had no chance of success as long as the Germans did not allow it to expand into the occupied territory.³²

Therefore, in the case of the Legion, but also in the case of Pétain's supporters, we are talking about a French anti-German and anti-Gaullist resistance. The dividing lines between Gaullists and anti-Gaullists or anti-Germans were still thin, and people, as we saw above, were migrating from one side to the other. Still in the process of strengthening his organization in exile, de Gaulle had not yet succeeded in convincing all French forces of his capacity to re-establish a French order on national territory. As mentioned above, in the early years he focused more on the forces in exile and less on those within France. Perhaps that is why many members of the internal resistance also felt themselves to be in a different camp from de Gaulle, even though their ideals and mission coincided.³³ Nevertheless, one can see the symbolism of de Gaulle's movement right from the start. The historian Jean Lacouture observes that de Gaulle succeeded in giving the term "Résistance" a particular force and symbolism even before it had a military or material force.³⁴ That is why the term 'résistance' was also so quickly replaced by 'gaullisme,' as we shall see in the following lines.

On the other hand, many of those around Marshal Pétain believed that by maintaining a French government in Vichy, even if it was under close German control and required many compromises, they were preserving the core of French sovereignty. This complex phenomenon was also carefully analyzed by the Romanian diplomat Constantin Hiott, head of the Vichy Legation. In a report dated 15 January 1942, sent to the Bucharest headquarters, he stated the following:

*the words Gaullism, Gaullists sometimes appear in the press in the free zone, often in the press in occupied France and more often in the foreign press. But they do not always have the same meaning. Strictly speaking, the Gaullists are those French dissidents who have taken up arms against the Vichy government and depend on the committee of 'Free Frenchmen' set up by General de Gaulle. There is, however, a misguided tendency to apply this label also to French people who express anti-German sentiments, the words in question thus becoming synonymous with Germanophobia—Germanophobes. But there is a whole intermediate range between these two definitions.*³⁵

The explanation he gives in this report is similar to a definition given later by the historian Henri Michel, in a work devoted to the French resistance movement:

*Gaullism is affirmed as a spontaneous popular movement, which makes this term more than it really was, created voluntarily and spontaneously. De Gaulle in London is a soldier waiting to regroup French forces alongside those of Great Britain in the continuing war. He wants to be a military leader; for the French he has long been a voice/path. In London we talk of Free France, of Fighting France. But Gaullism has asserted itself in France.*³⁶

Another French historian, Yves Bonnet later wrote of “les faux Vichyssois,” those who were not really Gaullists, but who joined the resistance movement while maintaining the appearance of loyalty to the Vichy regime, taking the blame for those who chose open forms of resistance, because otherwise they would not have had the means to carry out their mission. Here again, Yves Bonnet mentioned in particular the former members of the Deuxième Bureau and those of the Surveillance du territoire.³⁷

The Romanian diplomat’s analysis of de Gaulle’s and Pétain’s policies is also interesting. He considers that the Marshal’s success was due to the way he presented the action of his own government, namely, a government that pursued a national and independent policy, making collaboration with Germany conditional on the “honor and dignity” of France. This attitude weakened the Gaullist movement, which could no longer so vehemently support the Vichy government’s policy. On the other hand, from his point of view, the Gaullist movement had recently become an instrument of the British, who were using some French colonies militarily and economically (Equatorial Africa, Cameroon, New Caledonia, Tahiti, and Syria).³⁸ The diplomat Hiott considered that de Gaulle’s movement was in fact regressing at the time, but the word “Gaullism” was beginning to take on a wider meaning—that of Germanophobe. Also, not all Germanophobes (defined by this attitude as a result of the German occupation of France) were Anglophobes. England’s passivity did not offer confidence to the French. All these factors led to a mood favorable to Marshal Pétain, who felt the need to show solidarity with someone who declared himself the defender of their interests and those of the French state.³⁹

This analysis of “Gaullism” by Constantin Hiott also helps us to understand the movements and tensions within the French Legation in Bucharest, since the echoes of “Gaullism” were felt there too.⁴⁰ According to a report of the Special Intelligence Service in Bucharest, from March 1942, the links of the French Legation in Bucharest with those in Sofia and Ankara intensified. The aim was to

*establish a unity of informational and diplomatic action between the three diplomatic representations, and on the propaganda front to speculate on Germanophobic sentiments in Bulgaria and Turkey and to combat de Gaullism.*⁴¹

The same counter-movement was also observed in the French secret service and in Sofia. The Secretary of the Legation, Raymond Offroy,⁴² is said to have suggested that “the French intend to conquer the Balkans politically, speculating in particular on the Germanophobic disposition of the Balkan peoples.”⁴³ Later, a meeting between two French delegates in Syria and Jacques Truelle, Henry Spitzmuller, and Paul Raymond, held at the Legation in mid-February 1942, clearly indicated that the French government wanted a restoration of French unity in Southeast Europe and the Near East. At the same time, there was also talk of a rapprochement between the French and nationalist elements in the Southeast, “especially where the German occupation is severe.”⁴⁴ The presence of the three in the above discussion is all the more interesting because there were already mutual suspicions between Truelle and Spitzmuller about their loyalty to the government they represented. The Romanian secret services had information about both Gaullist actions and those to combat them, but did not intervene to stop either side. For example, at the beginning of January 1942, the Directorate General of the Police (DGP) was aware that French subjects Louis Ribout, a commercial agent, Jean Carvovoux, a naval engineer, Jules Boroievschi, a naval agent, and General Georges Catroux had gone to Ankara, then to Sofia, Bucharest, and Budapest, with the aim of “organizing Gaullist nuclei in the Balkans and Central Europe.”⁴⁵ The Romanian secret services also had information about some French secret service agents present in Romania, as was the case of the French Legation official, Émile Brochard, whom they knew had in fact been appointed secretary of the French secret service in Bucharest, even before he had arrived in Bucharest.⁴⁶

It can be seen that multiple forms of resistance were found among the French diplomatic staff in Bucharest, who were trying to define as clearly as possible their camp and the movements in which they were willingly or unwillingly involved. This explains the plea that J. Truelle made in January 1942 to the French community in Bucharest, for the policy of Marshal Pétain. He declared at the meetings he had with members of the community that there would be no more political dissidence within the French community in Romania, because the demonstrations of

*the so-called dissidents had been misunderstood, as they were in most cases not partisans of General de Gaulle or the English, but patriots exaggerated in their judgments, but sincere and loyal to France and Marshal Pétain.*⁴⁷

J. Truelle suggested closer contact with the Legation in order to facilitate their information and clarify the Vichy policy. The Special Intelligence Service sources in Romania noted that there was talk among the French colony of a decline

in the Gaullist movement and an increase in the political influence of Marshal Pétain.⁴⁸

In addition to information, there was also a need for a deeper control of the information passing through the Legation. On 25 January 1942, Jacques Truelle ordered all French Legation officials not to receive letters, collections, papers or money for dispatch to France except through the Legation attaché, Paul Raymond. Delivery was only made in an open envelope, no fees were charged, and only French subjects could benefit from this service, with the exception of some foreigners who had the approval of the ministry.⁴⁹ Another measure taken was to create a propaganda office and an information office within each French consulate in Romania. The propaganda offices were headed by consuls and vice-consuls, and in Bucharest they were headed by Jean Basdevant, the second embassy secretary.⁵⁰

In February–March 1942, it was not very clear whether Truelle was advocating one or the other. In any case, he was involved in discussions on both sides. The Romanian authorities had noted that the French government was suspicious of Truelle, who was allegedly sympathetic to the Gaullist movement.⁵¹ It seems that Truelle's interest in the resistance movement (Free France, but also sympathetic to the English) dated back to October 1940.⁵² At the end of January 1942, the French colony was also spreading the idea that the Vichy government intended to reshuffle the staff of the legations in Europe, precisely because of these suspicions of affiliation to the Gaullist movement, which was taking shape and beginning to take concrete action.⁵³

At the end of January 1942, when Jacques Truelle requested his return to France for a short period of leave, the French government did not give him permission, and the Romanian authorities interpreted this as resulting from the mistrust and reservation that the French government had, this time, towards H. Spitzmuller, who was supposed to replace him during his leave.⁵⁴ Probably from December 1940, when he was not seen as a possible member of the Gaullist resistance by the government in Algiers,⁵⁵ until the spring of 1942, when he was suspected precisely of Gaullism, Spitzmuller had better defined his choice. In any case, both diplomats revealed their Gaullist option in 1943—Spitzmuller was the first to officially join de Gaulle's movement, in 1943, followed by Truelle in June of the same year.⁵⁶

This vacillating attitude of the French diplomatic corps in Bucharest towards the Vichy government and the tendency to side with the resistance—whatever form this resistance took—was known and observed by the Romanian and German authorities in Bucharest. In his memoirs, Gerhard Stelzer, an adviser to the German Legation in Bucharest, mentioned that, during the entire "Pétain era," in Bucharest there was no relationship between the German and French legations

and that members of the latter, in particular the chargé d'affaires Spitzmuller, were supporters of the resistance movement.⁵⁷

Between February and March Pétain outlined new domestic policies and a program to strengthen the recognition of his government as a French national government that would attract popular support. Within the French Legation, the idea was circulating that the Vichy government's policy would soon be reflected more deeply among the French community in Romania, as the Vichy government wanted to implement "national discipline and politics in the homeland, following the model adopted by the Reich for Germans abroad."⁵⁸ This is why Truelle began a statistical evaluation of the French community in Romania. He wanted to know the profession, material and civil status of each member. The statistical documents were to be given to the French secret service "to verify the morality and patriotic conduct of each."⁵⁹ However, no further instructions from Vichy were forthcoming in this respect; on the contrary, an order was received postponing the application of new organizational or direct measures among the French community in Romania. The members of the Legation interpreted this decision as a political one, "the Vichy government having to radically transform the life of the French until it had precise indications of how the war would end."⁶⁰ The French Legation's intelligence service was also instructed to follow closely Romania's foreign policy in order to see how the war was developing in the East.⁶¹

An equally interesting episode—this time from the perspective of the interactions between members of the Legation and the Romanian authorities—was the discussion that Foreign Minister Mihai Antonescu had with J. Truelle on 29 January 1942. The latter asked him to pay more attention to the press and telegraph relations between Romania and France and to receive the representative of the Havas Agency, who could also go to South America and was useful from the point of view of spreading propaganda messages.⁶² He described Marshal Pétain as "an honest military man who does not engage in any kind of diplomacy or duplicity," which is why he wanted France to be reconciled with Germany, but in a way that France would not be humiliated but treated on an equal footing. Hence the tensions between the Vichy government and Berlin. At the end of the conversation between the two, J. Truelle assured him that in a few days Marshal Pétain would send two papers, one for Marshal Ion Antonescu and the other for his interlocutor, "as a testimony of the love for Romania and its leader and of the respect for the attachment to France that Romania knew how to preserve in difficult times."⁶³

Despite all these declarations of mutual respect, frictions between the Romanians and the French never ceased to occur. In January 1942, the telephone of typist Frazie, an employee of the French Legation, was taken out of service

by the authorities in Bucharest. Its reinstatement involved some rather insistent interventions by J. Truelle with the secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gheorghe Davidescu. Another episode was the publication in February 1942, in the newspaper *Unirea* (Union), of an article taken from an American newspaper and signed by Pierre Cot, former French Minister of Aviation.⁶⁴ In that article, Cot blamed General Maurice Gamelin, Marshal Pétain, and François Darlan for the defeat of the French, and published documents showing that he had repeatedly requested that France be provided with more military aircraft and combat equipment. The publication of this article in the Romanian press, as well as the resolution given by Marshal Antonescu stressing that the Vichy government was also responsible for the defeat, caused a stir in French diplomatic circles, with the head of the French Legation, J. Truelle, expressing his surprise at Antonescu's attitude towards the Vichy government.⁶⁵

TO DRAW some conclusions, it can be seen from the above analysis that the first months of 1942 were marked by a development of the Gaullist movement which would be reflected in the activity of the French Legation in Bucharest and which would influence the activity of the Legation as well as the relationship with the Romanian authorities. There was also a period of mutual suspicion and tactful dealings aimed at separating the French resistance groups: the Gaullists and the rest. Even though de Gaulle had managed to set up some important departments of a government in exile and had gained authority over some resistance groups by the autumn of 1941, there were still many groups and circles that still did not recognize de Gaulle's authority and acted on their own initiative. This made the general situation for those who in one way or another opposed the Vichy regime even more complicated. However, the need for unity of action was felt—hence the strength of the term “Gaullism,” which became synonymous with “resistance” or “Germanophobes.” As we can see, even Pétain's regime—at least until the return of Laval, on the one hand, and the Gaullist movement's gaining greater military and material strength, on the other—was perceived as a form of resistance, of maintaining the French state as a distinct entity. This also complicated the relationship between the Vichy regime and the diplomatic network abroad. It was clear that the diplomatic network in Southeast Europe in particular had become a stake in these movements and repositioning of power. The attitude of the French diplomatic corps abroad could also influence the French colonies they represented, and at the same time it was an important point of informational connection with what was happening in Vichy, but also with the situation on the front. This was also very clear in the case of the French Legation in Bucharest, which was very attentive to the oscillations of the Vichy government, the mood of the French community, and

the attitude of the Romanian authorities and their relationship with the Germans in Bucharest. This explains the caution of French diplomats towards and the moments of “chicanery” with the authorities in Bucharest.⁶⁶ Nor was there mutual trust between H. Spitzmuller and J. Truelle, although in 1943 they both officially declared their intention to go with General de Gaulle. Despite these difficulties, the Legation in Bucharest in the spring of 1942 was neither inactive nor isolated from the political life in Romania. J. Truelle’s frequent meetings with representatives of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, as well as the visits of various Romanian personalities or foreign diplomats to the Legation,⁶⁷ demonstrated the friendly nature of the French-Romanian diplomatic relations. □

Notes

1. Even the entrustment to Marshal Pétain, who was 84 years old, of the entire executive power in the state was symbolic in this sense of preserving the French national identity. The Marshal enjoyed immense prestige and was seen as a savior for his decision not to leave the French territory and to suffer alongside the French, as well as for his decision not to surrender the French fleet—see Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *L’Abîme 1939–1944* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1986), 232.
2. Ana Maria Stan, *Relațiile franco-române în timpul regimului de la Vichy 1940–1944* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2006), 91. Therefore, at least until the return of Laval as head of the government in April 1942, Pétain’s policy was seen in opposition to that of Laval, therefore a policy closer to the French than to the Germans.
3. Initially, Pierre-Étienne Flandin was immediately brought in as head of government, then Admiral François Darlan (from 9 February 1941), who took under his authority the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Intelligence, the General Secretariat of Government, and control of the French Navy.
4. “Raporturile franco-germane și mesajul de anul nou al Mareșalului,” Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter cited as AMAE), coll. 71/France/1942. General, vol. no. 5, fol. 28.
5. Stan, *Relațiile franco-române*, 175.
6. Stan, *Relațiile franco-române*, 177.
7. Stan, *Relațiile franco-române*, 179.
8. Duroselle, 413.
9. The subject of political-diplomatic relations during the Second World War has been dealt with by Ana Maria Stan in several books and articles, but we mention in particular the work *Relațiile franco-române în timpul regimului de la Vichy 1940–1944* (French-Romanian relations during the Vichy regime 1940–1944). The book deals with the evolution of French-Romanian relations at several levels: diplomatic, political, cultural, and economic. The author has succeeded in defining many nuances of

these relations, especially as she has inevitably also analyzed the relationship between the two countries and Nazi Germany in a secondary way. Other, fragmentary aspects can be found in Jean Mouton, *Journal de Roumanie: 29 août 1939–19 mars 1946: La II^e guerre mondiale vue de l'Est* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1991); Carol Iancu, *La Shoah en Roumanie: Les Juifs sous le régime d'Antonescu (1940–1944): Documents diplomatiques français inédits* (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier III, 1998); Gavin Bowd, *Paul Morand et la Roumanie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).

10. Stan, *Relațiile franco-române*, 91.
11. Stan, *Relațiile franco-române*, 77.
12. In this study we used a number of unpublished documents from the Romanian National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives of Bucharest (hereafter cited as NCSA), Informative coll.—French Legation. The documents have never been presented to the public before. They comprise notes of informative follow-ups made by the Special Intelligence Services (SIS) or reports of the Police General Directorate on the activity of the French diplomatic corps in Bucharest during the Second World War. We have also supplemented the analysis with documents from the Paris collections or the France collections in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as with documents from the French diplomatic archives in Paris–La Courneuve. Aspects of the French resistance in Romania in the period 1940–1944 have also been analyzed by Ana Maria Stan in her study “Aspects de la Résistance française en Roumanie après 1940: Diplomates, enseignants et écrivains,” in *De part et d'autre du Danube: L'Allemagne, l'Autriche et les Balkans de 1815 à nos jours: Mélanges en l'honneur du professeur Jean-Paul Bled*, edited by Mathieu Dubois and Renaud Meltz (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2015), 131–144, as well as by Adriana Bichiș, in the study “De Vichy à la Résistance: Le cas du diplomate Jacques Truelle,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai: Europaea* 12, 3 (2012): 189–208.
13. Dorin Teodorescu, *Rezistența franceză internă: Eliberarea Parisului* (Slatina: Editura Fundației “Universitatea pentru Toți,” 1999), 45–46.
14. Teodorescu, 46.
15. Teodorescu, 47.
16. Teodorescu, 44.
17. Sébastien Albertelli, *Les Services secrets du général de Gaulle: Le BCRA 1940–1944* (Paris: Perrin, 2020), 151.
18. Albertelli, 137.
19. Albertelli, 44.
20. Albertelli, 138. Traditionally, within the General Staff, Bureau 2 dealt with intelligence. From 1 July 1940, Captain André Dewavrin (later known as Passy) was appointed by Charles de Gaulle to head the 2nd and 3rd Bureaus of the General Staff. From 15 April 1941, the name Service de renseignement was officially established and Passy took steps to create a *service de renseignement extérieur* to recruit volunteers and send them on various missions. The service soon came into contact with the British Secret Service, the Intelligence Service and Military Intelligence (MI6). The relationship with the British secret service was essential, with both the French

and the British benefiting from the partnership. The English side helped a lot from a material perspective, in return gaining vital information about what was happening on the continent. Surprised by the German troops entering France in 1940, Britain withdrew all its agents from the French territory, and had to call on the services of the governments in exile in London, such as the French, Polish, and Czech ones. On 24 July 1940, Passy proposed the creation of a network of undercover and mobile agents to gather intelligence, but also to ensure the continuous recruitment of other agents. In 1941, as the network became increasingly well-established in France, the need was felt to protect it by creating a counterespionage network. The aim was to identify and gather sympathizers, enemy agents and collaborators in order to prepare the ground for their neutralization at the time of landing and to place people in key positions (Albertelli, 141–142).

21. From January 1942, General de Gaulle also added a National Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*Commissariat national de l'Intérieur*) and a Cipher Section (Albertelli, 139).
22. The section grew rapidly, with the number of personnel increasing from 23 in the summer of 1941 to 77 the following summer, and the number of officers from 10 to 19 (Albertelli, 143).
23. Jean-Marie Guillon, “La Légion française des combattants, ou comment comprendre la France de Vichy,” *Annales du Midi: Revue archéologique, historique et philologique de la France méridionale* 116, 245 (2004): 5.
24. Guillon, 14.
25. Guillon, 9.
26. Guillon, 17.
27. It seems that similar initiatives had also been launched among the French colony in Bulgaria, but there the idea failed mainly because of the small number of members of the colony (Note of 7 February 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 228).
28. “Personnel de l’Ambassade de France à Bucarest (21.12.1940),” French Diplomatic Archives—La Courneuve, Political and Commercial Correspondence coll. War 1939–1945, vol. 1, London-Alger, file no. 298, fol. 18.
29. [Note of 7 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 227.
30. [Note of 21 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, tab. 111.
31. [Note of 7 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, tab. 227.
32. “Telegramă descifrată: Legațiunea Vichy, 3 februarie 1942,” AMAE, coll. 71/France/1942–1947. Telegrams, vol. no. 13, fol. 34.
33. Historian Henri Michel noted that the French Resistance as a general phenomenon comprised a multitude of opinions and visions that were constantly multiplying. Those who engaged in such a struggle did so voluntarily and remained isolated for a long time. Regardless of the party and group to which he had previously belonged,

- voluntary involvement in the resistance movement was a mission of survival, often without knowing the finality of this path. Therefore, each individual involved supported and created his own intellectual itinerary. Henri Michel, *Les Courants de pensée de la Résistance* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962), 8.
34. Yves Bonnet, *Les Services secrets français dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 2013), 160.
 35. “Gaullism și naționalism, Vichy, 15 ianuarie 1942,” AMAE, coll. 71/France/1942. General, vol. no. 5, fol. 16.
 36. Michel, 728.
 37. Bonnet, 176.
 38. “Gaullisme și naționalism, Vichy, 15 ianuarie 1942,” fol. 17. In addition, the dissensions within the Gaullist movement were also a further obstacle to gaining prestige. The English press also gave credit to Pétain’s government, saying that the France of tomorrow was the France of Marshal Pétain and not of the Gaullist organizations. The US government was also on good terms with the French government, wanting to keep France in its sphere of interest, especially as Hitler was entertaining the possibility of using France in a war against it. Throughout 1941 several positive signals circulated between France and the US, with Marshal Pétain assuring that the French fleet would not be used against America. For its part, the American government promised, for example, that it would not change the status quo of Martinique. “Telegramă descifrată: Legațiunea Vichy. 31 XII 1941,” AMAE, coll. 71/France/1942–1947. Telegrams, vol. 13, fol. 119.
 39. “Gaullisme și naționalism, Vichy, 15 ianuarie 1942,” fols. 19–20.
 40. In a study on the issue of French resistance in Romania, Ana Maria Stan identified several directions or groups coagulated around the French Institute of Higher Studies in Bucharest and the French university mission, the French Legation and, last but not least, around various private cultural and scientific bodies, such as the Byzantine Institute in Bucharest or simply French businessmen in Romania (Stan, “Aspects de la Résistance,” 135–136).
 41. “Notă în jurul activității Legației franceze,” NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 277. On 2 January 1942, the Turkish ambassador, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, sent assurances to J. Truelle that he would not allow any member of the Legation or the Turkish colony in Bucharest to serve Gaullist interests in any way. “Nota DGP din 2 ianuarie 1942,” NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 5.
 42. Secretary Raymond Offroy was in the attention of the French National Committee in London as a supporter of the Free France movement: “Personnel de l’Ambassade de France à Bucarest (21.12.1940),” French Diplomatic Archives—La Courneuve, Correspondence politique et commerciale fonds. Guerre 1939-1945, vol. 1, London–Algiers, file no. 298, fol. 18. The action of the French secret services is, again, a complex subject for reflection and analysis, since their directions of action and legitimation were multiple. On the one hand, there were the actions of those in Bureaus 2 and 5, as well as the Bureau Surveillance du territoire, who acted mainly to maintain

the French statehood in this war; on the other hand, there were the agents who rallied to de Gaulle and created their own network before joining the military and the clandestine actions of combatant France. Colonel Passy stood out within the latter group, as he succeeded in setting up a real secret service. Last but not least, there was the counterespionage, coagulated in Algiers. It was not until 27 November 1943 that all these groups took on a new direction with the creation of the Directorate General of Special Services (La Direction Générale des services spéciaux) (Bonnet, 335–338).

43. [Note of 27 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 278. This may also explain the return to the French Legation in Bucharest of a courier, D. Forestier, who had been definitively recalled by the Vichy government a year earlier precisely on the grounds that he was a Gaullist sympathizer. Note of 12 February 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 188.
44. [Note of 19 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 279.
45. Note of 9 January 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 28.
46. Note of 12 January 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 42.
47. Note of 27 February 1942, AMAE, coll. 71 Franța. Relații cu România, vol. 73, fol. 27.
48. Ibid.
49. [Note of 25 January 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 111.
50. “Notă: Activitatea consulatelor franceze,” AMAE, coll. 71 Franța. Relații cu România, vol. 73, fol. 28.
51. Note of 30 January 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 136.
52. A note from the Gaullist camp shows that his appointment to Bucharest was made precisely because of his sympathy for the idea of a Free France (Stan, *Relațiile franco-române*, 230). This is corroborated by the observation made by the historian Yves Bonnet whereby despite the confusion of the summer of 1940, the French secret services continued their mission, within a year developing a network of another 500 agents and volunteers with whom they operated without the German authorities being aware of it (Bonnet, 230). In Truelle’s case, it later emerged that he played a dual role in Romania: on the one hand he was a representative of the Vichy government, but at the same time he constantly passed on information to the Allied camp. His option for Free France became visible and public in 1943, when he left his post in Bucharest and joined the Comité français de libération nationale (Stan, *Relațiile româno-franceze*, 230).
53. For example, in February 1942, some 500 food parcels were sent to Romania for French prisoners in Germany. The parcels were taken by sympathizers of the Gaullist

- movement. [Note of 30 January 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 136.
54. [Note of 27 January 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870.—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 122.
55. In December 1940, Spitzmuller was characterized by the press attaché of the Legation in Bucharest, Chopin Haudry de Janvry, as intelligent but lacking in character. The Vichy government was advised not to count on him, not even for secret missions. “Personnel de l’Ambassade de France à Bucarest (21.12.1940),” French Diplomatic Archives—La Courneuve, Correspondence politique et commerciale fonds. Guerre 1939–1945, vol. 1, London–Algiers, file no. 298, fol. 18. It seems that the leadership of Free France was not convinced of Spitzmuller’s qualities as a member of the Gaullist movement, either. In November 1941 he was characterized in a report by the Free French representatives in Turkey as a reliable informer, but one who risked being exposed (Stan, “Aspects de la Résistance,” 141).
56. Stan, “Aspects de la résistance,” 141.
57. *Diplomați germani la București, 1937–1944: Din memoriile dr. Rolf Push, atașat la legăție, și dr. Gerhard Stelzer, consilier de legăție*, translated by Ileana Sturdza and Cristian Scarlat, edited, notes and index and selective illustrated material by Cristian Scarlat (Bucharest: All Educational, 2001), 154.
58. [Report of DGP, 22 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 231.
59. Ibid.
60. [Report of DGP, 28 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 265.
61. Ibid.
62. At the same time, Jacques Truelle explicitly told Andrei Clot, the representative of the Havas-OFI Agency in Romania, to keep a favorable attitude towards Romania in all his articles, because “the French have every interest in maintaining good relations with the Romanians and working for future friendship.” [Note of DGP, 24 January 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 108.
63. “Notă asupra convorbirii avută în ziua de 29 ianuarie 1942 de Dl. M. Antonescu, vice-președintele Consiliului cu Dl. Truelle, Ministrul Franței la Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri,” AMAE, coll. 71/France/1942. Relații cu România, vol. no. 73, fol. 20.
64. 21 January 1942, AMAE, coll. 71/France/1942. Relații cu România, vol. no. 73, fol. 15.
65. [Note of 22 February 1942], NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fols. 257–258.
66. Thus, for example, in February 1942, H. Spitzmuller asked J. Truelle to ask the Vichy government to change all the Romanian staff in the service of the French Legation and replace them with people brought in from France. He suspected that the Romanian intelligence organs were using these personnel for their own purposes.

Note of DGP, 11 February 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 183.

67. The New Year's reception organized by the French Legation was attended by 140 people, members of the French colony, as well as Romanian personalities such as B. Theodorescu, N. Șerban, Dr. F. Reiner, C. Daniel, M. Vulcănescu, Alex. Cantacuzino and others (Note of 1 February 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—*Legăția franceză*, vol. 17, fol. 1). Also, for example, on 7 January at the headquarters of the French Legation were invited René de Weck, minister of Switzerland, Princess Șuțu, and Baron Mocioni-Stârcea and his wife. The next day, Truelle had a meeting with the Turkish Ambassador, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, at the Turkish Embassy, and in the evening of the same day, Truelle visited E. M. Gunther, the wife of the former American minister in Bucharest. On 10 January, the head of the French Legation attended a reception organized by the Swiss Legation, where he also met other Romanian and foreign diplomats (Note of SIS, 13 January 1942, NCSSA, Informative coll., file no. 187.870—French Legation, vol. 17, fol. 47).

Abstract

The French Legation in Bucharest and the “Gaullist Challenges” in the Spring of 1942

The end of 1941 saw a strengthening and coagulation of the resistance forces around General Charles de Gaulle, albeit still far from the military, political and material power he would have in 1943. However, even the word ‘Gaullism’ came to acquire a special symbolism, being associated with the word “resistance.” But the forms of French resistance during the Second World War were manifold, and in the early period of the Vichy regime some French even perceived Pétain’s government as the last form of French resistance to the territorial occupation of France. All these nuances and directions of resistance were also reflected in the dynamics and activity of the Vichy diplomatic corps. Therefore, in this study we will analyze the positions and actions of some diplomats of the French Legation in Bucharest towards the Vichy government, towards the Gaullist movement, but also their relations and interactions with the Romanian authorities in the first months of 1942.

Keywords

French Legation, Romania, Vichy, Gaullism, resistance