

# **“Substantial progress has taken place in [the] United States – Rumanian relations”: The Road to Upgrading the Level of Diplomatic Missions from Bucharest and Washington 1961-1964**

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## **Abstract**

*This study represents an analysis of the United States-Romanian relations during 1961-1964, focusing on the background process that led to the elevation of diplomatic missions to embassy status in June 1964. Primarily based on documents from the American and Romanian archives, it reveals the path to diplomatic ties' improvement during the Kennedy years and the Johnson Administration's first year. While Romania was seeking to distance itself from the Moscow's economic and political control and to strengthen its domestic and foreign position, the United States started to reexamine her relations with the satellite – countries from Eastern Europe. In this regard, the study explains how the US' perception toward Romania started to change, what gestures and actions influenced this change and how the bilateral relations registered progress amidst Cold War crises and international tensions.*

## **Introduction**

The US-Romanian relations endure for more than 135 years. The first diplomatic contacts between Washington and Bucharest had been established in 1880. Back then, the American government officially recognized Romania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1879 and the Kingdom of Romania in 1881. For a while, there had been only one US designated official for the American diplomatic missions in Bucharest, Belgrade, Athens and sometimes Sofia altogether. Contacts generally involved trade dealings and consular issues regarding US citizens & US citizens with business interests in Romania and Romanian citizens in the United States.

The first signs of progress between the two countries were visible after World War I. In 1921, the American government appointed the first plenipotentiary minister exclusively designated to the US Legation in Bucharest. Romania had already sent a diplomatic representative to Washington three years earlier, thus officially establishing

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the Romanian Legation in the United States. The US-Romanian relations severely deteriorated during World War II. Five days after Pearl Harbor and as a member of the Axis powers, Romania declared war against the US on December 12, 1941; the American government answered in kind in June 1942. The two countries resumed their diplomatic relations at the beginning of the Cold War yet by 1946-47, the Romanian political climate was changing dramatically. It was only a matter of time before a communist Kremlin-controlled regime was imposed in Bucharest. On December 30, 1947, King Michael I of Romania was forced to abdicate and leave the country. The communists seized the entire power and Romania completely entered into the Soviet Union's orbit. For the next decade, its relationship with the Western world was very fragile – the one with the United States being no exception.

Soviet military forces were withdrawn from Romania in 1958, thus ending a 14 years period of military occupation combined with an aggressive, direct Soviet control exerted over the country. Romania's bilateral relations with Western countries received their second chance after the Soviet retreat. In this regard, Romanian communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and his Politburo were determined to focus mainly on the economic opportunities the West could offer – like trade and industrial investments<sup>1</sup>.

Washington reacted both cautiously and with interest to Romania's signals for reconciliation. The Department of State and the US Legation in Bucharest started to devise an approach for this process. To give this opportunity a fair shot, the plan was to start with cultural and educational exchanges then move to the next level – namely diplomatic and economic affairs. Over the year of 1960, there were several talks between the two countries with respect to a cultural exchange agreement and the raising of diplomatic missions. On November 10, 1960, Secretary of State Christian Herter wrote a memo to President Dwight D. Eisenhower on raising the level of diplomatic missions from Bucharest and Sofia. The Secretary argued that

*“Such action would strengthen our diplomatic presence in Rumania and Bulgaria and place us in a better position to influence the Rumanian and Bulgarian Governments toward more active and positive relations with the United States and a less dependent relationship with the Soviet Union”<sup>2</sup>.*

Further on, the memo explained that Romania was one of the three countries that still had a US Legation instead of an US Embassy (the other two being Hungary and Bulgaria). The diplomatic status was also an issue for the American stationed diplomatic corps because the protocol considered them as lower in rank compared to their Western or Soviet counterparts. The memo insisted that

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<sup>1</sup> Mihai Retegan, 1968. *Din primăvară până în toamnă*, RAO, București, 2014, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorandum to the President, 11/10/1960*, file 611.6594/11-562, 1960-1963, Central Decimal File, Record Group 59 (hereafter RG 59) General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Herter explained to President Eisenhower that, while Hungary also had a Legation, he would not recommend changing the diplomatic status because US' relations with Budapest were “*abnormal and completely negative*”. One of the reasons for this was the 1956 uprising and the Soviet aggressive intervention to restore order in Hungary.

*“...this step does not connote approval of the policies of the Rumanian and Bulgarian regimes ...We already maintain Embassies at Moscow, Warsaw and Prague, and it is accepted that the status of these three Missions in no way implies approval of the policies and character of the governments concerned”<sup>3</sup>.*

Consequently, Secretary Herter recommended the elevation of US diplomatic missions from Bucharest and Sofia to embassy level<sup>4</sup>.

In the summer of 1960, the United States initiated talks with the Romanian government on raising the diplomatic missions. The proposal was connected to an agreement for cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries. These bilateral exchanges were an American idea and they would later become part of an exploratory ‘bridge-building’<sup>5</sup> plan with the communist regime from Bucharest. The study of American official documents shows that the US was the one who set the tone and dynamic of these bilateral talks. If the negotiations were well-received and respected by the Romanians, then the chances to develop serious diplomatic relations would be higher.

As far as Gheorghiu-Dej was concerned, his country’s main purpose now was to make the transition from a predominantly agricultural state to an industrial-oriented one. This was the key factor in approaching the US with an extended view. Dej and his advisers knew that the US was the only country in the world who could provide them with the best available technology and they were planning to start negotiations for acquiring American logistics. On December 9, 1960, Romania’s plenipotentiary minister to Washington George Macovescu informed the Secretary of State that his country agreed to proceed with the cultural exchanges (in fields like education, science, arts, technology, sport and tourism among others)<sup>6</sup>. Overall, though, these bilateral ties evolved very slowly – definitely much slower than the Romanian authorities had anticipated. One could say that this was a predictable thing due to ideological differences, as the United States was a democracy and Romania a totalitarian state.

The 1960s bore a significant importance for the US-Romanian relations. Slowly but surely, progress has been made over this decade. The Washington-Bucharest

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>5</sup> According to US historian Frank Costigliola, the policy of ‘bridge-building’ was launched in the spring of 1966 by the Johnson Administration, aiming to open avenues of political, economic and cultural contact with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. On the long term, President Lyndon Johnson and his advisers hoped that this policy of ‘bridge-building’ would undermine the communist ideology behind the Iron Curtain, see Frank Costigliola, *Lyndon B. Johnson, Germany, and "the End of the Cold War"* in Warren I. Cohen, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (eds), “Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World. American Foreign Policy 1963-1968”, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994, p. 193.

After analyzing documents from both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations on US-Romanian diplomatic relations during 1961-1968, I believe that the ‘bridge-building’ unofficially started during the Kennedy Administration. President Kennedy was eager to see some change in US’ relationship with the Eastern European countries and he understood that trade played a particular key role in this regard. So he started to put things in motion, by creating the Export Control Review Board in 1961 and advocating for trade liberalization and diplomatic normalization with the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Kennedy’s vision would be taken forward by President Johnson, who shared the same interest in opening relations with the satellite-countries and encouraging any chance for potential political transformations in the region.

<sup>6</sup> *Letter to the Honorable Christian A. Herter, 12/9/1960*, file 611.6643/10-2260, 1960-1963, Central Decimal File, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

rapprochement represented a complex diplomatic effort for both sides and it is important to emphasize that this relationship had a constant ascending trajectory during these years. Looking at the given circumstances and obvious differences, this should not be considered a minor thing. There were also frictions and problems but, as a whole, they had minor and temporary significance.

### **The Kennedy Administration opens the path for normalization with Romania**

On January 20, 1961, former Democratic Senator from Massachusetts John Fitzgerald Kennedy became the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. The new presidency aimed to bring a fresh perspective on the US domestic and foreign policy. At the height of the Cold War, Kennedy's *New Frontier* program mesmerized the American public - it was full of hope and vitality and promised to rejuvenate every field of the American society, from politics to culture. Since his days as a Senator, John F. Kennedy stressed that the US should extend their ties with the states behind the Iron Curtain. JFK pushed for trade liberalization with Eastern Europe by taking the floor in Senate meetings and publicly contesting the *Battle Act* that was prohibiting trade and economic ties with the satellite - countries<sup>7</sup>. This would have been an important move, especially after the Western countries helplessly watched as the USSR brutally repressed the Hungarian uprising in the fall of 1956. In an August 1957 speech, named 'Fighting against Imperialism – Poland and Eastern Europe', Kennedy pleaded for a larger support toward Eastern European countries, by invoking the 1956 uprising in Poznań and the harsh living conditions imposed on the Polish people by a Moscow – controlled regime<sup>8</sup>. The speech was essentially emphasizing that the American foreign policy toward this area was at crossroads and the strategy of containment needed to be revisited, especially the way it was applied by the Eisenhower Administration. Keeping Moscow's satellites in isolation, Kennedy argued, was not a wise decision<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> John F. Kennedy made references to his congressional initiatives regarding Eastern Europe during his 1960 presidential campaign. See, for instance, the following speech: John F. Kennedy: "Speech of Senator John F. Kennedy, Polish-American Congress, Chicago, IL," October 1, 1960. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25896> (accessed on June 15, 2018)

*The Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951* was also known as *Battle Act* - named after the US House Representative of Alabama Laurie C. Battle. The bill prohibited the US government to providing assistance to countries that maintained economic relations with the Soviet Union. Along with the *Marshall Plan* (1947), *Battle Act* is part of a series of laws destined to contain communism and Soviet influence around the world. The changes mentioned by President Kennedy in his speech were designed to bring flexibility in enforcing the law while maintaining the principles of containment. This flexibility was meant to build bridges of assistance and cooperation with communist states in order to create break-through in their total dependence on the Kremlin.

<sup>8</sup> *Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers*. Senate Files. Speeches and the Press. Speech Files, 1953-1960. "Struggle against Imperialism, Part II -- Poland and Eastern Europe", August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1957. JFKSEN-0898-002, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (accessed on August 6, 2017)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

Less than 4 years later, John F. Kennedy became President of the United States. In his first State of the Union Address on January 30, 1961, the President stressed that the American people

*“(...) must never forget our hopes for the ultimate freedom and welfare of the Eastern European peoples. In order to be prepared to help re-establish historic ties of friendship, I am asking the Congress for increased discretion to use economic tools in this area whenever this is found to be clearly in the national interest.(...)”*<sup>10</sup>

The Romanian officials were genuinely interested to decipher President Kennedy's foreign policy vision and closely watched his Inaugural & State of the Union Addresses. The ideological differences were more than obvious; however, the Romanian Politburo was quick to notice the signal for opening toward Eastern Europe. For quite a while, Romanian leader Gheorghiu-Dej had some ambitious plans for his country and he recognized the opportunity he now had with the new leadership at the White House. By establishing commercial ties with the West and acquiring American technology, Dej could build an industrial-oriented economy with agriculture as a secondary resource. An internal production would have given Romania a certain degree of autonomy in the Soviet-controlled COMECON and would have cemented the path for exports to the Western markets. It was Romania's opportunity to transform itself from a predominantly agricultural country into an industrialized one. In retrospective, Dej's decision to approach the US and distance himself from COMECON has strengthened his political power.

Building better relations between Washington and Bucharest was a long-term process, with several ups and downs. In the spring of 1961, the cultural and economic agreements signed in the previous year gave a boost to the American-Romanian relations. On April 5, Romanian minister George Macovescu met with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Richard Davis (he would become the US ambassador to Romania in 1965) to discuss about the US-Romanian consular and diplomatic relations. Davis expressed his delight that a financial settlement was concluded and the cultural exchanges were progressing. From US standpoint, the next step was to update the status of consular relations; hence, a draft was prepared by the Department of State<sup>11</sup>. The new consular convention would replace the only document of this kind signed between the two countries in 1881. Richard Davis also made a point by reminding to Macovescu that the family reunion cases had to be settled before the two governments would proceed toward signing the new convention. Macovescu tried to push things further, by mentioning the elevation of the diplomatic missions. Undoubtedly, he said, the consular issues were important and mandatory to be solved, but wouldn't that be easier if there were ambassadors instead of ministers in Bucharest and Washington? The old saying 'first things first' can sum up Davis' answer:

<sup>10</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 30, 1961. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8045> (accessed on July 12, 2017)

<sup>11</sup> *Memorandum of Conversation, April 5, 1961*, file 611.6594/11-562, 1960-1963, Central Decimal File, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. The following lines from this paragraph are based on the same source.

*“Mr. Davis said very serious consideration is being given to the question and we believe steps along the lines just mentioned could be a strong contribution to a satisfactory resolution of the matter. Starting the process of settling these matters or at least beginning negotiations on these points would contribute to a favorable decision on this point.”<sup>12</sup>*

The US government considered that there were several issues that needed to be settled down before negotiations on diplomatic relations could start. Firstly, there were the unsolved financial claims which dated back to the World War II era, when Romania was an Axis ally. This situation, however, extended after 1944 when the Soviets imposed their control over Romania. Besides that, the US encountered constant barriers in solving pressing problems such as: reuniting the American-Romanian citizens with their families, solving people's cases with both US & Romanian citizenship who wanted to leave Romania for the United States and finding solutions for the financial and material compensations that the American citizens of Romanian descent were entitled to receive from the Romanian communist authorities. The US Legation and the Department of State had knowledge of hundreds of registered cases that were expecting a solution and this was a frequent topic of correspondence between the US mission in Bucharest and the State headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Legation's relationship with the Romanian government had been particularly hostile, especially when the Soviets were stationed in the country. Consequently, the communist regime from Bucharest constantly rejected the American requests to reconsider the above-mentioned problems. Once Gheorghiu-Dej began to see the American ties as a priority, he found himself obliged to pay attention to the US' demands. The American leadership was adamant regardless of political party, and made these requests as a prerequisite for any progress in bilateral relations.

From the Romanian point of view, the political-diplomatic issues were connected to the success of acquiring American technology and they were usually subordinated to the economic developments. The Romanian strategy was to solve all the other issues in order to achieve this main goal – trade with the US. The Bucharest regime continued to harbor its communist discourse with every occasion but its belligerency toward the United States would become more subdued.

From the American perspective, the political and diplomatic issues had a high priority. The Cold War strategy demanded a different approach for the totalitarian states – from USSR to its satellites. Each step of rapprochement was therefore carefully considered – its implications, its medium and long-term impact and the decisions that lay behind these actions. As opposed to the Romanian government who wanted to speed up the process, the American officials decided to follow a lengthier approach, with small but steady steps. The power dynamic between the two countries is obvious, with the US setting the rhythm and Romania following the lead. Still, Romania did it in her own way by adjusting and trying to maintain a balanced position. When the context and issue required it, other Romanian diplomats - such as Bălăceanu and Mănescu - received similar answers as the one provided by Davis to Macovescu. The Americans took every opportunity to discuss the most pressing bilateral problems until they were solved or a reasonable compromise was made instead.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem.*

The situation got complicated in April 1961 when the CIA-backed invasion in the Bay of Pigs failed terribly. The unexpected outcome deeply affected the Kennedy Administration and took Washington by surprise. The mood became tense in Bucharest, too. The Romanian Politburo released a public statement condemning what they considered an American attack over the communist regime in Havana and the Cuban fight against imperialism. This incident, along with the highly tense summer of 1961 that followed, determined a freeze in the bilateral relations. The Soviet ultimatum over Berlin, the Berlin Wall and the pressure for a peace treaty with East Germany were major foreign policy problems for the Kennedy Administration that also had an impact on the US-Romanian diplomatic talks. In the fall of 1961, the cable correspondence between Deputy Chief of mission in Bucharest Frederick Merrill and State Department official Harold Vedeler revealed that the US did not expect any new significant developments. The main reasons were the international atmosphere created by the Berlin crisis and the constant delays of the Romanian government to solve Washington's requirements for improving relations:

*"Regarding the possibility of elevation of the mission, you are correct in assuming that there is nothing new. We believe that the Rumanians are unlikely to respond to our proposals for substantive negotiations during the present period of tension. While our proposals did not directly tie the question of elevation of mission to a successful conclusion of other negotiations, I believe the Rumanians understood clearly the desirata which we have in mind. For the time being, I think it is unlikely that they would be willing to consider a price of any importance to us. As you may have noticed from the memoranda of conversations, when Macovescu was recently questioned about the Rumanian failure to reply to our proposals, he repeated on three occasions that the proposals were still under consideration and we would eventually receive a reply."*<sup>13</sup>

On December 12, 1961, the newly appointed Romanian minister to Washington Petre Bălăceanu presented his credentials to President Kennedy. The conversation was short and the American President went straight to the point: the international context was unfavorable for the United States to increase trade and he warned that this would also affect the Washington-Bucharest negotiations on this issue<sup>14</sup>. President Kennedy's words carried a double message: the Administration expected patience from the Romanians and it was testing their intentions and actions. The American officials were eager to assure themselves that Romania's economic priorities were not orchestrated by the Soviets. But things were actually the opposite: Dej was protecting his ambitions and he planned to keep his talks with the US outside Moscow's reach. In the end, both countries would wait for the New Year to come and see where these talks would lead.

The most significant event of 1962 was, undoubtedly, the Cuban missile crisis. Romania was indirectly affected by the political and military confrontation between the

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<sup>13</sup> Letter Harold Vedeler to Frederick Merrill, September 25, 1961, file Status of Mission, 1944-1964, Classified General Records, RG 84, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>14</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey*, vol. XVI, (hereafter FRUS, 1961-1963, vol. XVI), ed. James E. Miller, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994, Document 6.

United States and the Soviet Union. The crisis' developments and significance, though, had a profound impact on the US-Romanian relations. Diplomatic contacts increased during 1962 with the Romanians remaining focused on the same issue, namely trade. The Department of State officials and the US minister in Bucharest constantly reminded to Mănescu, Macovescu, Bălăceanu and other dignitaries that the Romanian government must honor its commitments for reuniting families and maintaining cultural exchanges in order to see progress with the US.

At the beginning of 1962, Frederick Merrill and Robert Thayer ended their mission in Bucharest as William Avery Crawford, a Foreign Service career diplomat and the first-to-be US ambassador in Romania, was assigned to the mission. Crawford spent three years in Romania and worked tirelessly to improve his country's ties with the communist leadership. He successfully managed the trade opening and the rising of diplomatic missions to embassy level. In his first meeting with the Romanian foreign minister Corneliu Mănescu, Crawford expressed his desire to discover the Romanian society and to visit the country as much as possible<sup>15</sup> (he was obviously aware of the totalitarian surroundings). Crawford was highly regarded by Dej and then Nicolae Ceaușescu for his interest to interact with the Romanian people and to explore their world.

In October 1962, the world anxiously watched the development of the Cuban missile crisis. The crisis symbolized both danger and opportunity, and for Romania it became an opportunity to gradually assert her independence from Moscow in the following years. Dej found out about the Soviet missiles in Cuba as all other country leaders across the globe had – by listening to President Kennedy's *Address to the Nation* from October 22 (October 23, Romania time). On October 25, the Romanian government released a public statement regarding the missile crisis in which it condemned the naval quarantine and described it as a destabilizing and aggravating action<sup>16</sup>. The American minister in Bucharest observed that the statement was moderate in tone and followed the general ideological line yet without using a too aggressive language. The Romanians were among the last ones who issued such a declaration and according to Crawford, the written statement was not sent to the US Legation<sup>17</sup>. The American officials made a good guessing: the leadership from Bucharest was feeling anxious about recent developments and cautiously adopted a neutral position, as not to make the Soviets too suspicious.

Two weeks after the Cuban missile crisis ended, William Crawford sent a memo on November 15 to the Department of State on Romania's reactions to the crisis. Crawford observed that "*The official Rumanian response to the Cuban crisis was cautious, noncommittal, and relatively moderate. Though the RPR generally followed the Soviet lead, its reactions were more guarded*"<sup>18</sup>. There are various explanations for this

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<sup>15</sup> *American Legation Bucharest to the Department of State, Foreign Service Dispatch – 144, February 7, 1962, file 611.6594/11-562, Central Decimal File, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.*

<sup>16</sup> *American Legation Bucharest to the Department of State, Airgram - 105, November 11, 1962, file 611.6594/11-562, 1960-1963, Central Decimal File, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.* The following explanations summarize the main ideas of the document.



cautious attitude – like the uncertain future or the wish to not jeopardize the negotiations with the US. Sure enough, Romania never stepped aside the ideological line and the communist government from Bucharest was convinced that this confrontation happened because of the “American imperialism”. Still, it was not as vocal as other satellite – countries’ governments. Crawford perceived the level of anxiety in Bucharest and how relieved everybody was when Khrushchev announced the missiles’ withdrawal and the de-escalation that followed. In this light though, the American diplomat estimated that the US-Romanian relations would not see any major changes: “*It is doubtful that the Soviet retreat will have any direct effect on Rumanian-Soviet relations, even though the Rumanian leaders’ confidence in the USSR’ ability to uphold its international commitments must have been weakened*”<sup>19</sup>.

The October events stuck in Dej’s mind for a long time. From a Romanian-US relations point of view, the Romanian political gestures were very important in showing detachment of those ‘no way out’ –like Soviet decisions. Years later, Raymond Garthoff (Department of State official and expert on Eastern-European Affairs) recounted a meeting on October 4, 1963 between Dean Rusk and Corneliu Mănescu in which the Romanian foreign minister tried to assure the Secretary of State that Romania did not know about the Soviet missile build-up in Cuba<sup>20</sup>. Mănescu also added that his country would remain neutral in a presumptive political-military conflict between the US and USSR if Cuba-alike actions were to happen again. Being afraid of war, the Romanian diplomat was eager to state that Romania did not have Soviet nuclear weapons on her soil (the Americans already knew that) and he hoped that the US would not target Romania as part of the retaliation plan<sup>21</sup>.

A careful reading of the US Legation’s reports to the Department of State reveals the complexity and astuteness of the Legation’s staff work in collecting, analyzing and transmitting information to their superiors in Washington. The American diplomats in Bucharest noticed a while ago that things started to change in the Romanian capital but persuading their colleagues in Washington proved to be a long-time process. Ambassador Crawford later explained that “*My main job was to report to Washington and to try to persuade them that all these things [a.n. the frictions between the Romanians and the Soviets, the Romanian political - domestic changes, Dej’s ambition for industrialization, Romania’s gestures of independence toward Moscow] were really happening. It wasn’t easy*”<sup>22</sup>.

US minister William Crawford was keeping the Romanian political transformations under a close eye, as he was trying to understand the power mechanisms of Dej’s leadership, the way his oppressive regime was controlling the society and how this was reflecting over the country’s relationship with the United States. When Dej’s efforts to distance himself from Moscow became a fact, the US Legation in Bucharest

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> Mihai Retegan, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-44. In his presentation and analysis of the Rusk-Manescu meeting, the Romanian historian quotes Raymond Garthoff’s study *When and Why Romania Distanced Itself from the Warsaw Pact*, published in “The Cold War International History Bulletin”, No. 5, spring 1995.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup> Torbert, Horace G., William W. Moss, and William Roy Crawford, Interview with William A. Crawford, 1989, Manuscript/Mixed Material, Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib000245/> (accessed on August 7, 2017)

urged the Department of State to change its approach on Romania. Crawford estimated that the Romanians ought to be somehow rewarded for their gestures of independence and he constantly advanced this recommendation over the year<sup>23</sup>. His suggestion added to the positive feedback that Richard Davis and Harold Vedeler were getting from their contacts with the Romanian mission in Washington; therefore, the Kennedy Administration initiated a series of actions designed to bring the US-Romanian relations to a new level.

In retrospect, the Cuban missile crisis had a substantial impact over the Washington-Bucharest relations and this became obvious starting with August 1963. Firstly, the US Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman became the first Cabinet member of an American Administration to visit communist Romania. His visit took place between August 3-5 and his talks with Dej focused on trade and export licenses<sup>24</sup>. A few days later, on August 8, the Romanian deputy foreign minister Mircea Malița came to Washington for the signing ceremony of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty<sup>25</sup>. By no means just a coincidence, Malița travelled to Washington with the same flight as William Crawford did<sup>26</sup>. The US minister was to be in the American capital for a couple of days so the Romanian official took this opportunity to have an off-the-record conversation with Crawford. As a result of this talk, the American minister decided to ask his friend and Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Averell Harriman for a meeting with Malița, considering this action to be highly valuable for both states involved. With Harriman's extraordinary diplomatic experience and knowledge on Eastern Europe, Crawford thought, the bilateral relations might be given a speed-up<sup>27</sup>. He, indeed, made the right call. Harriman and Malița met on the same day with the Test Ban Treaty signing; the main topics of discussion were Romania's position within the July COMECON Conference from Moscow, the Romanian leadership efforts to move farther apart from Kremlin's policy and trade issues. Harriman praised Romania's stance toward the Soviet Union but was noncommittal on trade issues, warning that their examination would take some time<sup>28</sup>. Harriman wrapped up his thoughts at a later meeting with Dean Rusk and persuaded the Secretary that Romania deserved additional attention<sup>29</sup> and proper signals had to be sent out soon to Bucharest.

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<sup>23</sup> William A. Crawford, recorded interview by William W. Moss, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program (hereafter William A. Crawford interview), March 12, 1971, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. XVI, Document 20.

<sup>25</sup> The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty had been already signed on August 5 in Moscow by the US, UK and USSR and was the extraordinary accomplishment of long-time negotiations between Western countries (US, UK, France, Canada) and the Soviet Union on applying sanctions over nuclear testing. The document aimed to put an end to nuclear testing on soil, in water and air, thus leaving the underground testing as the only acceptable option. The initial objective was to ban them altogether, but the Kremlin refused this option fearing UN nuclear inspections and considering them as espionage. Gheorghiu-Dej had declared in several occasions that Romania was against possessing nuclear arsenal and Mănescu held a speech in March 1962 during the Geneva Disarmament Conference in which he pleaded for a nuclear-free Balkan Peninsula in *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. XVI, Document 10.

<sup>26</sup> William A. Crawford interview, March 12, 1971, p. 20. The following lines are based on Crawford's recount of the events.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. XVI, Document 20.

<sup>29</sup> William A. Crawford interview, March 12, 1971, p. 23.

Yet the highest achievement for the American-Romanian ties was Minister Crawford's meeting with President Kennedy on August 23, 1963. Crawford described to President Kennedy Romania's political, economic and social evolution, highlighting Bucharest's signals for extending trade with the West and for building economic cooperation with the US and her allies. The American minister found President Kennedy being "*extremely interested in developments in Romania*" and in favor of fresh measures to support Romania's current path<sup>30</sup>. Kennedy's interest had very much to do with a recent report presented to him by the Export Control Review Board<sup>31</sup> regarding the East-West trade. The report had been sent to the President on August 15, 1963 and was in favor of expanding trade with the satellite-countries but without the Soviet Union<sup>32</sup>. The report submitted to debate the present tactics of approving licenses and extending them, the proposal for bilateral agreements with these states and redrafting the procedures for trade contacts liberalization (in cooperation with the US Congress and federal institutions such as the Departments of Commerce, State, Defense and Justice)<sup>33</sup>. Before the report was sent to the President, Secretary Rusk praised Romania and its evolution during the Board's meeting by remarking that

*"At the moment, Rumania seems to be ripe for a push toward better relations. We should be forthcoming promptly on a number of trade items in which Rumania is interested. If, then, the hoped-for improvement in our relations takes place, we should liberalize further (...) Rumania was the most immediate matter to be looked at."*<sup>34</sup>

As the signals from Bucharest were considered encouraging, Romania emerged as a good candidate for the policy changes and it was therefore chosen to be the first country to take advantage of them. In this regard, Rusk's remarks during the Export Review Board meeting and the report itself explain President Kennedy's interest in having a conversation with Minister Crawford and his desire to see the matter solidly pursued through Congress, as the legislative power was the one able to initiate change in trade negotiations and bring amendments to existing bills.

In the fall of 1963, the US-Romanian relations were at an all-time high since Romania was under communist rule. From a commercial standpoint, things looked like

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> In May 1961, President Kennedy signed the *Executive Order No. 10945 'Administration of the Export Control Act of 1949'*, hence creating an internal working committee named 'The Export Control Review Board' to examine the at the highest inter-departmental level actions and policies outside the commercial field that could have implications over the US national security. Once concluded, their recommendations would be discussed with the President and their approval was to be implemented by the Department of Commerce, in accordance with the amendments brought to the Export Act of 1949. The Board's members were the Secretaries of State, Defense, Commerce and their deputies. The issue was commonly referred to as the 'East-West trade'.

<sup>32</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Foreign Economic Policy*, vol. IX, (hereafter FRUS, 1961-1963, vol. IX), eds. Evans Gerakas, David S. Patterson, William F. Sanford, Jr., Carolyn B. Yee, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995, Document 327.

The Romanian-American trade relations are thoroughly examined in Mircea Răceanu's book, *The History of the Most Favored Nation Clause in the Romanian-American Relations*, Tipogrup Press, Buzău, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> FRUS, 1961-1963, vol. IX, Document 326.

they started to work out well for Dej's regime; one American company had its license approved for a future collaboration with soon-to-be-finished Galați industrial plant. Moreover, the elevation of diplomatic missions to embassy status had significant chances to succeed in the near future. Even if the American officials did not consider the matter as highly important, they were aware that it was a question of prestige for the Romanian government, especially one in front of the Soviets. In this promising atmosphere, the news of President Kennedy's assassination on November 22 was received with both sadness and shock in Bucharest. Gheorghiu-Dej and members of the Romanian Politburo were in an official visit to Yugoslavian President Josip Broz Tito at that time. Dej offered his condolences to the US chargé d'affaires in Belgrade while prime-minister Maurer in Bucharest called Minister Crawford to do the same thing. Months later, Dej confessed to Crawford that he considered John F. Kennedy as a "*great leader and man of peace*"<sup>35</sup> and that he spent that night awake, talking to Tito and wondering what was going to happen from then on<sup>36</sup>. This was actually one of the questions everybody in the world contemplated. The communist countries were especially concerned because the assassin was an American with communist beliefs and they were now fearful that his action would have serious repercussions over their relationship with the US and it would reflect in a change of approach in the US foreign policy. A Romanian delegation led by the vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers Gheorghe Gaston-Marin attended the funeral of President Kennedy in Washington, D.C. on November 25 and received President Johnson and Secretary Rusk's assurances on continuing President Kennedy's policy regarding US-Romanian relations<sup>37</sup>.

### **The Johnson Administration seeks to strengthen the bilateral ties: the June 1964 elevation of American and Romanian diplomatic missions to embassy level**

In his first Address to the Congress, President Lyndon B. Johnson pledged to carry on the Kennedy legacy – from the civil rights movement to honoring the American foreign policy commitments<sup>38</sup>. By making this commitment, Johnson assumed the political vision and legacy of the former Administration and made it his own. As it happened with all other states, Romania was also assured that President Kennedy's demarches would now be fulfilled by President Johnson. The advisory team was to stay virtually the same, with a couple of additions or replacements, but without bringing major changes in the decision-making process or within the decisions proposed to be implemented. The main American cast - Rusk, Harriman, Crawford, Davis and Vedeler –

<sup>35</sup> *Telegram American Legation Bucharest to the Department of State, January 1, 1964*, file POL 15-1 RUM. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>36</sup> William A. Crawford interview, March 12, 1971, pp. 26 – 27.

<sup>37</sup> *Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANR)*, fond CC al PCR, Secția Relații Externe, dosar 89/1963, pp. 2-32.

<sup>38</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson: "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress," November 27, 1963. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucs.edu/ws/?pid=25988> (accessed on August 15, 2017)

was there to stay and continue its mission to improving ties with Bucharest and expanding diplomatic and trade relations.

The year of 1964 marked an important moment in the American-Romanian relations with the elevation of diplomatic missions to embassy level. This achievement certified the success of American and Romanian diplomacy in their efforts to find common ground and efficient cooperation for the progress of their bilateral relations. It was a significant step forward for the Dej regime and part of an increasing political involvement in international affairs for Romania. From the beginning of the '60s, Gheorghiu-Dej had been constantly interested in designing a Romanian foreign policy line. In this regard, Romania's position on the international scene identified itself through the following: supporting peace, promoting cooperation, diplomacy and negotiations as tools for solving divergent issues, adopting a non-belligerent or neutral position in conflict situations, supporting disarmament, non-proliferation and the ban of nuclear testing (especially for a nuclear-free Balkan peninsula) and the nations' right for self-determination. In this decade of the Cold War, one can see that Romania's behavior on the international scene was a mix between political idealism, pragmatism and communist ideology. This mix of ideas and actions gave Romania a voice on international affairs – a quite respectable one for an Eastern European communist country.

In a February 1965 report of the US Embassy in Bucharest there is a political and economic evaluation of Romania corroborated with the medium and long-term objectives of the Johnson Administration regarding US-Romanian relations. The US institutions considered that their main mission was "*The encouragement and support of Rumania's drive for independence (...)*"<sup>39</sup>. At that time, the most efficient way to encourage this trajectory was through trade:

*"Strong economic ties with the US will give Rumania strategic assurances against possible Soviet retaliation, will decrease its dependence on Moscow, and increase its interdependence with the West."*<sup>40</sup>

Romania had asked for synthetic rubber, equipment and logistics for the chemical, electrical, metallurgic industries and so on. The approval of export licenses for these products was a necessary step toward normalization and some progress in this regard had already been made. The export of American technology and equipment, the approval of scientific exchanges and the trading of Romanian products on the American market were potential economic instruments in designing a long-term climate of cooperation<sup>41</sup>. Politically speaking, the United States respected Romania's involvement in the international affairs for the same reason, namely to encourage an independent attitude of the Romanian communist officials. The Rusk-Mănescu talks over the years are the most relevant example. Nuclear disarmament, China and Soviet Union, the German

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<sup>39</sup> *US Embassy Bucharest to the Department of State, February 24, 1965, file POL 2-3. Politico-Economic Reports. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem.*

question and West Berlin, the Vietnam War, the Middle East, United Nations' issues, Western Europe and the Common Market were among the most frequent topics of conversation between the two countries' representatives (along with the raising of diplomatic missions to embassy level).

In retrospect, the Romanians gave more consideration to the elevation of missions than the Americans. This is an aspect very well explained by the former US plenipotentiary minister and then ambassador William Crawford:

*“MOSS: How well developed was the move towards raising the legation to embassy level?  
CRAWFORD: Well, for us this was a rather minor part of the whole thing. On the other hand the Romanians considered it far more important because for them it was a prestige matter. Since the Soviets had ambassadors everywhere, they didn't want their envoys to be of subordinate rank. I guess the representative of the United States doesn't need to have his prestige enhanced, whether he's down the protocol line a bit or not. (...) From our standpoint, the elevation to an embassy would follow naturally if everything else went right (...).”*<sup>42</sup>

With the exception of Secretary Herter's memo to President Eisenhower in 1960 – in which the elevation of diplomatic missions was considered advisable – the subject had not been specifically discussed during Kennedy's presidency. However, this possibility had been reexamined at the lower-levels of the Department of State by taking into account the Romanian signals sent to the US diplomatic personnel stationed in Bucharest. Consequently, the Administration's specialists started to focus their efforts in this direction. The US intended to coordinate this move with her Western allies – the United Kingdom and France. One week later, Under-Secretary of State George Ball sent a cable to London and Paris instructing the ambassadors to start consultations with the two governments regarding the elevation of diplomatic missions in some Eastern European countries. In his cable, Ball explained that this demarche is motivated by “(1) progress in solution of bilateral problems and in expansion of bilateral relations; and (2) extent to which EE country [is] asserting [a] more independent position toward Soviet Union” and mentioned that the US mission in Bucharest has priority compared to Sofia and the one in Budapest would keep its current status for now<sup>43</sup>. Both Britain and France answered positively and raised their diplomatic missions in December 1963. It was now, exclusively, United States' turn.

The process for elevating the status of diplomatic missions intensified by the end of 1963 and during the first half of 1964. There were still several unsolved issues with the Romanian communist regime on the American agenda – such as the family reunions' cases, the double citizenship ones and the signing of a new consular convention. Their favorable and fast settlement was the key for bilateral negotiations. Dej undoubtedly understood this message from the beginning; but he also had an agenda of his own – Romania's industrialization and strengthening his own political power. So his regime improvised a diplomatic scheme based on the principle of proportionality: the US Legation claims would be solved favorably at the same rate with the American

<sup>42</sup> William A. Crawford interview, March 12, 1971, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. XVI, Document 21.

government's positive answers to their industrial shopping list and trade issues. It was definitely not a strict tactic as the Romanians were fully aware they could not force the Americans' hands with anything; but this was their way of trying to have a position or a card to play in the negotiation process. It is the reason why we find these topics of conversation in almost every contact between the US and Romanian diplomats, whether there were high-level meetings or regular interactions. For the Romanian communist regime, the American requests had no value except as transactional or maneuvering means in their negotiations with Washington. Consequently, the communist authorities solved or delayed this kind of cases by exclusively connecting them to advantages obtained from the American leadership or the lack of them.

In his first 1964 conversation with foreign minister Mănescu, William Crawford expressed his appreciation for the Romanian government's decision to solve all the consular cases that the US Legation brought into attention a year and a half ago. Mănescu confirmed to Crawford that there would be an additional 105 cases to be solved (with the possibility to see this number rising), besides the 267 cases demanded by the Legation<sup>44</sup>. Once these issues were solved, Crawford explained to Mănescu, the Romanian government could pretty soon expect an American decision on elevating the missions. Romania's recent progress and the plans for signing a new consular convention had been extensively analyzed by Washington and awaited a final decision<sup>45</sup>. On March 2, Rusk sent a message to Mănescu through the US Legation, thanking him for his pledge to solve the consular cases and informing the Romanian foreign minister that the Gaston-Marin trade delegation had been approved to visit the United States; the Romanian diplomat was delighted by the answer he received "*from my friend and colleague, Rusk*"<sup>46</sup>.

The elevation of the diplomatic missions from Bucharest and Washington became a sure thing to happen by April 1964. President Lyndon Johnson held a 'Tuesday-lunch' meeting on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at the White House and gave Dean Rusk a green light for elevating the US diplomatic mission in Bucharest to embassy status<sup>47</sup>. An April 15 memo from the Department of State to McGeorge Bundy mentions the President's approval and thoroughly explains the reasoning behind this decision:

*"Since the question of upgrading the level of the respective diplomatic missions in Bucharest and Washington was raised at Rumanian initiative early in 1961, substantial*

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<sup>44</sup> *American Legation Bucharest to the Department of State, Airgram – 212, February 28, 1964*, file POL 15-1 RUM. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59 and *Telegram from American Legation Bucharest to Department of State, February 29, 1964*, file Political Affairs & Rel. RUM-US. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> *Department of State to American Legation Bucharest, March 2nd, 1964*, file Political Affairs & Rel. RUM-US. 1/1/64, 1964-1966 and *Telegram American Legation Bucharest to the Department of State, March 5, 1964*, file Political Affairs & Rel. RUM-US. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>47</sup> *Memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, April 15, 1964*, file POL 17. Diplomatic & Consular Representation. RUM-US. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

*progress has taken place in United States – Rumanian relations. It provides a solid base for the planned action. The resolution of outstanding bilateral relations ... is proceeding satisfactorily. (...) Favorable developments in United States-Rumanian relations have been accompanied by equally significant changes in Rumania's relations with the Soviet Union, including steps by Rumania toward internal de-Russification and its assertion of increased political and economic independence and autonomy. These changes constitute further grounds for raising the level of our mission. (...)”<sup>48</sup>*

In these conditions, Gheorghiu-Dej's address to the plenary session of the Romanian Workers' Party Central Committee – known as the 'April 22<sup>nd</sup> Declaration'<sup>49</sup> – gave an impulse to the developing events. It also marked an important transformation into the Romanian foreign policy, one that had a long-term and major impact firstly on Romania's relations with the Soviet Union and secondly, on its relations with the US and Western Europe. There are numerous academic works on communism in Romania that focus on these particular subjects and their implications<sup>50</sup>. Strictly related to US-Romanian relations though, the 'April 22<sup>nd</sup> Declaration' and Dej's bold approach pleasantly surprised the American diplomacy. It was obviously a change designed to strengthen Dej's personal power and the regime's oppressive control. But this Romanian effort to distance itself from Moscow really mattered for the US because each dismissal of Soviet authority had the potential to challenge the forced order behind the Iron Curtain. This kind of actions would threaten the equilibrium of the Soviet sphere of influence thus determining changes and affecting the USSR's prestige globally. There were significant aspects within the complex configuration of the Cold War. It's true that Dej and then Ceausescu touted their independent stance toward Moscow yet the domestic political regime remained a Stalinist one<sup>51</sup>. The Romanian society did not feel the wave of a better life. The American officials were fully aware of that but they considered this to be the first step out of many others to follow in Romania's eventual transition to democracy. It took another 25 years until Romania got to that point.

In his analysis of the April 22<sup>nd</sup> Declaration, US minister Crawford pointedly remarked that its content was representing

*“(...) [the] pronouncement [of] Rumania's right and intent to exercise national independence and equality in Communist world. In essence, it constitutes resounding proclamation of emancipation from satellite status and marks emergence of what may be justly termed new and original form national Communism.”<sup>52</sup>*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> Official: “Declaration Regarding the Romanian Workers Party's Position on the Communist and Proletarian International Movement Problems”, published on April 26, 1964, in “Scântea” (The Romanian communist regime official newspaper).

<sup>50</sup> Florin Constantiniu, Mihai Retegan, Larry Watts, Dennis Deletant, Vasile Buga, Lavinia Betea, Mioara Anton, Vasile Popa, Dan Cătănuș – are a few of the Romanian and American historians whose works focused on the subject and significance of the April 22, 1964 Declaration.

<sup>51</sup> Mihai Retegan, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>52</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Eastern Europe*, vol. XVII, (hereafter FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XVII), ed. James E. Miller, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996, Document 141.



This expression of ‘national communism’, Crawford continued, manifested itself through a couple of “remarkable” actions, such as: the refusal to accept USSR’s over-regulations within COMECON and the imposition of an economic specialization, the reduction of Soviet influence in Romanian daily life (as part of the de-Russification campaign, the Russian language was no longer mandatory to be taught in schools, and the Soviet monuments, street names, buildings and town names were removed and replaced with Romanian ones, etc.) the amelioration of diplomatic and economic relations with the Western world and the usage of the Sino-Soviet conflict in promoting Romania’s own political interests. The Moscow-Peking split had been a starting point for this Declaration and for the Romanian leadership’s desire to express its position of independence and denial of hegemonic tendencies. Crawford concluded his report by recommending the Department of State to exploit the good-timing of the Gaston-Marin’s trade –oriented visit in Washington in May and approve a general export licenses list for Romania, as a reward for her audacious attitude on international affairs<sup>53</sup>.

A last round of bilateral negotiations took place between May 18 – June 1, when American and Romanian officials agreed on raising the level of diplomatic missions and the Americans approved some US export licenses for industrial installations. The Romanian delegation was led by Gaston-Marin while Averell Harriman represented the Johnson Administration in these talks. On May 29, McGeorge Bundy sent President Johnson a memo on this subject, underlining the main points of agreement:

*“1. To expand Rumanian trade with the United States. Rumania will be authorized to buy 11 major industrial installations ... (out of an original shopping list of 15)... For their part, the Rumanian have given us assurances that US shipment will not be trans-shipped or re-exported, and technical data of US origin will not be disclosed or otherwise transmitted without explicit US approval...Estimated value of these sales, if consummated, is \$ 30 million a year.”<sup>54</sup>*

*“Essentially we achieved what we set out to get”, Bundy observed, adding that “The Rumanians accepted virtually every condition we levied, and this, despite the fact that we rejected their request for long-term credits and made clear that the most-favored-nation treatment would not be possible for some time, since this required a major legislative effort.”<sup>55</sup>*

For that precise moment, I consider that the Romanian diplomats underscored a major diplomatic success. Getting the export licenses was a significant step forward. Yet there is something related to this issue that is well highlighted in a State Department cable and is always visible when analyzing the related documents in general: because of their ideological vision, the Romanian officials do not seem to properly understand that protection tariffs, export licenses, commercial credit approvals or strategic materials supplying (nuclear technology included here) were regulated by laws and these laws were made and then approved by the US Congress<sup>56</sup>. These laws could not be changed at any

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*. The entire paragraph uses this source.

<sup>54</sup> *Memorandum to the President, May 29, 1964*, McGeorge Bundy. 6/1-30/64, volume 5, Memoranda to the President, National Security Files, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>56</sup> *Telegram from the Department of State to American Legation Bucharest, May 30, 1964*, file POL 1. General policy & Background. RUM-US. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

time or in whatever way; moreover, the President could not just change the laws at his will, regardless of how great or small the changes were. The budget for the ongoing year had been approved by Congress last year and the budgets for the next fiscal years were already being established. The 'Most Favored Nation' clause or the elevation of protection tariffs were issues that needed to be debated in congressional meetings and voted upon. If they passed, there would either be amendments to an existing bill or a new bill by itself; and all this process needed time.

Bundy concluded his memo with a very concise description of what motivated the United States to support Romania's current path and what were the expectations:

*"Perhaps the single most significant aspect of these talks was Rumania's determination to succeed in establishing a new and substantial relationship with the US – an important factor in Rumania's drive for independence from Moscow. However ...there is an awareness on both sides that the pace of these developments cannot be forced. To succeed, there must be a gradualness and a logic about them, as well as evidence of continued Rumanian independence in international affairs and greater freedom for the Rumanian people – a point Averell Harriman intends to underscore before the talks are over."*<sup>57</sup>

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1964, the United States of America and the Romanian People's Republic issued a joint communiqué announcing the decisions concluding their talks<sup>58</sup>. The official statement announced the elevation of diplomatic missions from Bucharest and Washington, D.C. to embassy level. The bilateral agreement also mentioned the following: solving potential conflicts through a third state or in an international court, expanding Romanian tourism to foreigners and easing restrictions by both states for business – related travel<sup>59</sup>. On August 14, Petre Bălăceanu presented his credentials as Romania's ambassador to the United States to President Johnson. William A. Crawford officially became the US ambassador to Romania on December 4 and presented his credentials to President Gheorghiu-Dej on December 24, 1964.

The change of diplomatic missions' status determined some Romanian officials to highlight the achievement in their correspondence with their American counterparts. The US ambassador in Buenos Aires Edwin Martin observed that the newly appointed Romanian ambassador to Argentina used a new expression in his courtesy message marking the occasion: "[to] maintain and improve the cordial relations, both official and personal, which unite our two countries and their respective missions"<sup>60</sup>. It may be considered a minor thing but, as Martin noted, this was the first time in those years when a communist country used this concluding remark in a diplomatic message toward the United States<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> *Memorandum to the President, May 29, 1964*, volume 5. McGeorge Bundy. 6/1-30/64, Memoranda to the President, National Security Files, LBJL.

<sup>58</sup> *Telegram from the Department of State to American Legation Bucharest, May 30, 1964*, file POL 1. General Policy & Background. RUM-US. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>60</sup> *American Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, Airgram –44, July 18, 1964*, file POL 17. Diplomatic & Consular Representation. RUM-US. 1/1/64, 1964-1966, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*.

Aside from the American specific requirements in order to change the diplomatic status, the communist regime in Bucharest also took some actions that persuaded the American officials to accelerate the process. Gheorghiu-Dej started to extract the Romanian daily life, the schools and the manufacturing of historical facts from the Soviet influence. By the end of 1963, the US Legation in Bucharest announced Washington that the Romanians had stopped the radio-jamming of Western posts. In June 1964, Dej granted amnesty for political prisoners. Overall, these actions proved that the Romanian government was capable to initiate change and develop a political trajectory of its own. By raising the diplomatic status and encouraging Romania's involvement in international affairs, the United States indirectly helped the Eastern European country to maintain this path of autonomy and reject Moscow's full control.

### Conclusion

The US-Romanian relations registered great progress during the first four years of the 1960s. It all began with a cultural and scientific exchange agreement between the two countries – a document that started the process of expanding bilateral relations – and reached a high with the elevation of diplomatic missions to embassy level. Once the Soviet troops withdrew in 1958, Romanian communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej turned his attention to modernizing the Romanian state-controlled economy. To accomplish his ambitious plans of industrialization, he needed to gain access to the best technology available, and this could only be obtained from the United States.

The Romanian move of rapprochement toward the United States was essentially motivated by economic interests. At the same time, Romania started to redefine her foreign policy objectives and to gradually move farther apart from Moscow and its political and economic control; it sought to make her voice heard on the international scene and became involved in a variety of international issues – from the non-proliferation treaty to the Vietnam War. The changes that Romania experienced during this time were received with a lot of interest by the United States, who was also beginning to reexamine her relations with Eastern Europe. The Kennedy Administration came with a new perspective over dealing with satellite-countries from Eastern Europe and trade was considered the most efficient way to open the path for normalization.

However, the process did not go as fast as the Romanians would have hoped. The United States' government had several conditions that were expected to be settled before proceeding to trade and diplomatic negotiations. Besides that, the international atmosphere had been tense and highly volatile, putting its mark over the US-Romanian bilateral talks. Trade negotiations regularly stagnated when the Kennedy and Johnson upper-echelons of the Administration focused on the come-and-go international crises, yet Romania remained a topic of discussion in the lower ones – as in the State Department's correspondence with the US diplomatic mission in Bucharest – and in the NIEs (National Intelligence Estimates) made by the intelligence community. Most contacts were established through the Department of State officials. The information traffic between Bucharest and Washington, the political initiatives and strategies developed were mainly managed by the Secretary of State Dean Rusk and his team of experts on Europe, Eastern Europe and Soviet Union.

Secretary Rusk's constant talks with foreign minister Mănescu covered a vast array of foreign policy topics and were very useful in providing an insight into the communist Romania's political thinking. The Romanians used these diplomatic conversations in order to stress their independent attitude in international affairs and to prove they were not acting at Moscow's orders. As Romania was a totalitarian-governed country and a satellite of the Soviet Union, it required quite an ability to emphasize and successfully support this position of independence. The Eastern European country still pursued an anti-Western and anti-capitalistic discourse, but it was certainly more tempered than before. The first years of the Sixties were just the beginning of Romania's more independent stance; later on, Romania supported Israel and the US position during the 6 Day War in June 1967 (the communist countries and the USSR supported the Arab states) and refused to join the Warsaw Pact countries in invading Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Though the American involvement in Vietnam brought a more aggressive language from the Romanian leadership, it remained relatively moderate when compared to other satellite-countries.

Ultimately, the elevation of diplomatic missions was Johnson Administration's reward to the Romanian government. As trade ties had yet to become feasible enough and the 'Most Favored Nation' treatment required a long-time debate for congressional action, raising the Legation to Embassy status was the most significant political step the United States could take at that time. Even if the Romanians initially eyed the United States for the commercial opportunities she could offer, Dej and his Politburo were very sensitive to diplomatic protocol and international prestige. The United States made this move knowing that it would be a much-welcomed change and would strengthen their bilateral ties. As more transformations were about to come on both domestic and foreign affairs, the two countries managed to forge a relationship that had a constantly ascending evolution for the rest of the decade.