

UNDER THE BLUE SKY: THE SIGNING OF THE ROMANIAN-TURKISH AIRLINES CONVENTION FOR THE REALIZATION OF REGULAR FLIGHTS BETWEEN BUCHAREST AND ISTANBUL (JUNE 3, 1939)



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Abstract

After the First World War we witness an unprecedented development of aircraft. In this "Golden Age of Aviation" a re-conversion of ex-military pilots takes place and thus commercial and postal aviation develops.

First of all, in this context, we will analyse in this study the Romanian flights that flew over the Turkish airspace on their way to Africa or the Middle East (1924-1939). In the logbooks of the Romanian aviators we find important information about the discussions with the Turkish aviators in Eskişehir or presentations of Turkish airfields (Yesilköy, Eskişehir and Adana). On the other hand, Turkish aviators flew over Romanian airspace with a stop in Bucharest (May 1931). They also participated in the Conference of the International Aeronautical Federation (June 1931, Bucharest).

Secondly, we will present the visit of the squadron of Turkish military aviators to Bucharest (May 1934). Romanian military aviators returned this visit and a squadron with 7 planes arrived in Ankara. They were received by Atatürk who gave each of them a golden watch with his signature (May 1935).

Thirdly, we will emphasize in this study the activity of three exceptional female pilots who flew in Türkiye or Romania: Smaranda Brăescu (Istanbul, 1933), Sabiha Gökçen (Bucharest, 1939) and Irina Burnaia (Ankara, 1939).

Fourthly, we will present the negotiations between Prince G. Bibescu and Celâl Bayar in order to open the first airline between Bucharest and Istanbul. Thus, the Romanian-Turkish Air Convention was signed on June 3, 1939. LARES made its first flight on June 5, 1939 at 8:00 a.m.

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from Yeşilköy/Istanbul and arrived at Băneasa Airport/Bucharest at 10:30 a.m.

The paper is based on unpublished documents found in the Archive of the Ministry of Romanian Foreign Affairs (fund Turkey, Ankara and Istanbul, special volumes concerning conventions). All documents will be correlated with information found in the National Archives of Romania, Romanian and Turkish press, as well as on memories of Romanian pilots.

Keywords: Romanian-Turkish Relations, Air Convention, Sabiha Gokcen, Turkish and Romanian Airlines, Yesilkoy, Turkish Aviation

MAVİ GÖĞÜN ALTINDA: BÜKREŞ İLE İSTANBUL ARASINDA DÜZENLİ UÇUŞLARIN GERÇEKLEŞTİRİLMESİ İÇİN ROMANYA-TÜRKİYE HAVA SÖZLEŞMESİ'NİN İMZALANMASI (3 HAZİRAN 1939).

Özet

Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra, uçakların görülmemiş bir gelişimine tanık olduk. Bu "Havacılığın Altın Çağı"nda eski askeri pilotların yeniden dönüşümü gerçekleşir ve böylece ticari ve posta havacılığı gelişir.

Bu bağlamda öncelikle Romanya'nın Afrika'ya veya Orta Doğu'ya (1924-1939) gitmek üzere Türkiye hava sahası üzerinden uçuşlarını inceleyeceğiz. Rumen havacıların seyir defterlerinde, Türk havacılarıyla Eskişehir'de yapılan görüşmeler veya Türk hava meydanlarının (Yeşilköy, Eskişehir ve Adana) sunumları hakkında önemli bilgiler buluyoruz. Türk havacıları ise Bükreş'te bir durakla (Mayıs 1931) Romanya hava sahası üzerinden uçtu. Ayrıca Uluslararası Havacılık Federasyonu Konferansı'na (Haziran 1931, Bükreş) katıldılar. İkinci olarak, Türk askeri havacılarından oluşan birliğin Bükreş'e yaptığı ziyareti (Mayıs 1934) sunacağız. Rumen askeri havacılar bu ziyarete karşılık verecek ve 7 uçaklık bir filo Ankara'ya varacak. Atatürk tarafından karşılandılar ve her birine kendi imzasıyla altın birer saat hediye ettiler (Mayıs 1935). Üçüncü olarak, bu çalışmada Türkiye veya Romanya'da uçuş yapan üç istisnai kadın pilotun faaliyetini vurgulayacağız: Smaranda Brăescu (İstanbul, 1933), Sabiha Gökçen (Bükreş, 1939) ve Irina Burnaia (Ankara, 1939). Dördüncü olarak Bükreş-İstanbul arasında ilk havayolunu açmak için Prens G. Bibescu ile Celâl Bayar arasında yapılan görüşmeleri sunacağız. Böylece 3 Haziran 1939'da Romanya-Türk Hava Sözleşmesi imzalandı.

LARES ilk uçuşunu 5 Haziran 1939'da sabah 8:00'de yapıyor. Yeşilköy/İstanbul'dan saat 10:30'da Băneasa Havalimanı/Bükreş'e varış. Bu makale, Romanya Dışişleri Bakanlığı Arşivinde bulunan yayınlanmamış belgelere dayanmaktadır (Türkiye, Ankara ve İstanbul fonu, ibadetlerle ilgili özel ciltler). Tüm belgeler Romanya Ulusal Arşivlerinde, Romanya ve Türk basınında bulunan bilgilerle ve ayrıca Rumen pilotların anılarıyla ilişkilendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romanya- Türkiye İlişkileri, Hava Konvansiyonu, Türk Havacılığı, Sabiha Gökçen, Türk ve Romanya Havayolları.

1. Prince George Valentin Bibescu and the Establishment of the First Bucharest-Istanbul Airlines

Two years after the end of World War I, the idea of an air route linking Paris to Bucharest took root in the mind of the Frenchman Marie Charles Duval and the Romanian Nicolae Titulescu. The French-Romanian Company for Air Transport (CFRNA) was founded in 1922. It soon offered service to the largest capitals in Europe: Vienna, Prague, Constantinople¹, Warsaw, Budapest, etc.

In 1925, it became the International Air Navigation Company (CIDNA). It operated until 1933, at which point it merged with three other airlines to form one that would stand the test of time: Air France². The first trip after the war between Constantinople and Bucharest in an airplane of the *Franco-Romanian Company* took place in 1923³. The Turkish government has ratified an agreement by which the *Franco-Romanian Air Navigation Company* will extend the Paris—Bucharest airline to Angora starting on September 1, 1924. The Romanian Ministry of Health will re-establish the sanitary control of passengers arriving by air at Băneasa Airport on the lines Bucharest—Constantinople⁴.

N. Caranfil, the Minister of Air and Navy, mentioned that there were negotiations with Türkiye for the Bucharest—Istanbul—Tel Aviv airlines to be operated jointly by Romanians and Turks. The conferences of the Balkan Entente appreciated the importance of the problem and studied the issue of their organization: “only Türkiye reacted negatively to any conventions on the exploitation of air traffic over its territory. It is believed, however, that as soon as Türkiye will have completed the organization of its national air navigation lines, we will be able to have connections with Turkish airlines as well as reciprocity”⁵.

¹ Serviciul aerian București—Constantinopol—Angora. Compania franco-română (Universul, 12.IX.1924).

² Maryla Boutineau, *La C.F.R.N.A.-C.I.D.N.A. Première compagnie aérienne européenne 1920-1933 – Aux origines d’Air France*, Heimdal Éditions, passim.

³ Natura, no 3/1923.

⁴ Prăbușirea unui avion CIDNA pe ruta București—Constantinopol cu pilotul turc İhya, cu un avion Potez, un inginer român de la Steaua Română, un reprezentant uzina franceză, un german, un pilot (Universul, 26.VI. 1931); Hava faciasının geride kalan felâketzedeleri. İhya Bey de maateessüf hava kurbanının arasında (Milliyet, 27.VI.1931).

⁵ Aviația noastră. Dl. N.Carafil, ministrul aerului și marinei se dovedește un bun organizator al aviației și marinei (Viitorul, 25.IX. 1936).

Within the Economic Council of the Balkan Entente in Athens⁶ (March 1937), the Romanian delegation discussed issues concerning the airlines in the Balkans. The Romanian and Greek states had aeronautical experts, the Yugoslav and Turkish states did not have experts, but were represented by S. Prendici and Kadri Kuslođu. The Turkish delegate replied that “in this matter must be addressed directly to the Turkish government”⁷.

Romanian minister in Ankara, Alexandru Telemaque noted that by art. 23 of the Montreux Straits Convention (July 21, 1936), the Turkish Government decided for civil aircraft the following overflight routes over Turkish territory. These lines were fixed for foreign civilian planes that occasionally flew over Turkish territory. Regarding the possibility of creating commercial airlines, the law that was supposed to regulate the operation of air services in Türkiye was still under debate in the TBMM (GNAT), thus, it was not possible to create a regular aviation line between Romania—Greece—Egypt or Romania—Palestine⁸.

On June 14, 1938, the Ministry of Air and Navy informed the Romanian MFA that during a recent trip of Prince V. Bibescu⁹ to Istanbul, he had a discussion with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs with a view to creating an airline Bucharest—Istanbul—Ankara—Alep—Cairo¹⁰. In this sense, it was requested to confirm the mentioned conversation and to order based on it the beginning of the necessary negotiations. At the 6th session of the Economic Council of the Balkan Entente in Istanbul (April 7-14, 1938), the Romanian delegation requested authorization to operate the Bucharest—Istanbul—Ankara—Tel Aviv and Bucharest—Istanbul airline¹¹.

Prince George Valentin Bibescu¹² made several flights Istanbul—Bucharest—Istanbul¹³ to discuss with Turkish officials for the opening of an airline on the route Istanbul—Bucharest.

⁶ Comunicatul asupra lucrărilor Consiliului Economic al Ȋnțelegerii Balcanice (Curentul, 29.III.1937)

⁷ AMAE, fond Ȋnțelegera Balcanică, vol. 27, p. 295.

⁸ AMAE, fond Conv. 8/ T.1 [Report no 1200/ 29.VII.1937].

⁹ Prens Bibesko dönüyor (Cumhuriyet, 30.V.1938); Prens Bibesko Bükreşe gitti. Maruf havacı, ayın ortalarına doğru tekrar memlektimize gelecek (Cumhuriyet, 1.VI. 1938).

¹⁰ AMAE, fond Conv. 8/ T.1, [Report no 35793/16.VI.1938].

¹¹ AMAE, fund Ȋnțelegera Balcanică, vol. 29, passim.

¹² George Paul Sandachi, Dan Harırca, Prințul George Valentin Bibescu : biografia unui călător, București, Ed. Vivaldi, 2005.

¹³ Türkiye—Romanya tayyare servisi. Prens Bibesko dün geldi, Ankara'ya gitti (Cumhuriyet, 11.VIII.1938).

Prince George Valentin Bibescu obtained on January 23rd 1910 the international pilot license number 20. He was one of the founding members of the *Fédération Aéronautique Internationale* (FAI). Between 1927 and 1930, he was vice-president, and between 1930 and 1941 was the president of the FAI.

Alex. Telemaque confirmed that the Bucharest—Istanbul airline was approved by the Turkish Government following the discussion between Prince V. Bibescu¹⁴ and Celâl Bayar on May 27, 1938¹⁵. Following the Verbal Note sent by the Romanian Legation in Türkiye on August 18, 1938, the Turkish Government mentioned on September 13, 1938 that it would send an answer when a decision was made on this subject¹⁶.

In January 1939, the Romanian Legation in Ankara announced that the German Lufthansa Company was in negotiations for the operation of the Berlin—Istanbul airline. Therefore, Romanian diplomat, C.M. Eliad, reiterated the Romanian request for the reciprocity of the Bucharest—Istanbul —Bucharest line and sent a note requesting authorization for the LARES Company¹⁷. On March 4, 1939, the Romanian Embassy announced

¹⁴ Prens Bibesko beyelmilel havacılık kurumu reisi şehrimizde (Kurun, 13.V.1938); Beynelmillel tayyare cemiyeti reisi. Prens Bibesko dün sabah şehrimize geldi ve Ankara'ya gitti (Son Posta, 28.V. 1938); Bibesko (Kurun, 28.V.1938); Prens Bibesko dün sabah şehrimize geldi. İstanbul'da bir saat kaldıktan sonra Ankara'ya hareket etti (Akşam, 28.V.1938); Prens Bibesko başbakanımız ve doktor Tevfik Rüştü Aras tarafından kabul edildi. Prens Bibesko Türkkuşu talebeleri arasında (Ulus, 29.V.1938); Prens Bibesko Ankara'da (Cumhuriyet, 29.V.1938); Prens Bibesko Türkkuşu uçlarında. Balkanlarda Turneye çıkacak Fıllolarınızın başında Atatürk kızı Sabiha Gökçenin bulunması bu seyahate büyük bir hususiyet vermektedir (Tan, 30.V.1938); Prens Bibesko diyor ki: Havacılıkta Balkanların en ileri milleti sizsiniz.Prens Bibesko B.Fuad Bulca ile konuşuyor (Ulus, 30.V. 1938); İstanbul—Bükreş hava seferleri başlıyor (Yeni Asır, 31.V.1938); Prens Bibesko bugün dönüyor (Kurun, 31.V.1938); Romanya ile Türkiye arasında hava seferleri (Akşam, 31.V.1938); Bükreş—Kahire hava seferleri (Son Posta, 31.V.1938); Romanya ile Türkiye arasında hava seferleri (Akşam, 31.V.1938); Prens Bibesko Bükreş'e gitti (Cumhuriyet, 1.VI.1938); Prens Bibesko diyor ki: Plânörcülükte, kuvvet ve tekilât bakımından Almanya'dan sonra Avrupa'nun ikinci milletsiniz (Ulus, 2.VI.1938).

¹⁵ Romanya İle Türkiye Arasında Hava Seferleri (Akşam, 31.V. 938).

¹⁶ AMAE, fond Conv. 8/ T.1 [Report no 1384-7/ 15.IX.1938].

¹⁷ ANIC, fond Industria Aeronautică Română (1925-1948); Dan Antoniu, George Cicos, Romanian Aeronautical Construction, Military Publishing House 1974, passim.; Horia Stoica, Dan Antoniu, Industria Aeronautică Română : I.A.R. (1925-1948), 2020, passim.

In 1928, the State Department of Aeronautics formed the Serviciul Național de Navigatie Aeriană (SNNA), which was to be responsible for the air services. In 1928 the SNNA was used to start up domestic air services again and to prepare the operation of international routes. The general depression after the famous Wall Street crack in October 1929 caused the opening of international air service to be delayed and SNNA was re-organised and reborn under the new name of Liniile Aeriene Romane Exploatate de Statul (LARES= Rumanian Airlines Exploited by the State) in 1930.

that the Turkish government had granted authorization for the operation of the Bucharest—Istanbul airline and that it was waiting for the delegate of the LARES Society for technical negotiations. Between March 13-17, 1939, Eng. Cociașu, Director of LARES, negotiated with Ali Rıza Akat, General Director of Communications in the Ministry of Public Works. Following the signing of the contract for the operation of the Istanbul—Bucharest airline, the LARES Company¹⁸ opened the first flight on June 5, 1939 at 8:00 a.m. from Istanbul and arrived at Băneasa Airport at 10:30 a.m.¹⁹.

Thus, on June 3, 1939, the *Convention regarding the performance by the civil air transport company LARES of regular flights between Bucharest and Istanbul* was signed. With the expansion of the war, the Turkish Government announced that starting from June 24, 1940, the Bucharest—Istanbul flights would be suspended.

One year after the signing, Şükrü Saracoğlu informed the Romanian Government that he was extending the contract with LARES until June 3, 1941²⁰.

2. Romanian Aviators Cross the Sky of Türkiye.

The Visits of Turkish Aviators to Romania

The Romanian air tours over Africa or Middle East were a series of trips, called “raids” in Romanian literature, made by the Romanian pilots over Africa or the Middle East between 1933 and 1939,

At the end of the year 1935, the French aircraft manufacturer Henri Potez had already delivered both civil as military aircraft to Rumania and participated in the Franco-Rumanian Airline Company/ CIDNA (since 1933 Air France). He hoped to increase his influence by forming an airline company in Rumania for mainly domestic air services. On 14 December 1935 together with private Rumanians investors he formed the Societatea Anonimă Română de Transporturi Aeriene (SARTA). Henri Potez owned 30 % of the shares of the SARTA, which had its head office at the Calea Victoriei 63 in the centre of Bucuresti. The Board of Directors included M. Gigurtu, A. Jancel and T. Aldéa. At its foundation the company was supplied with five brand new Potez 56-0, all carrying French registrations: F-AOCD, F-ANNA, F-ANNB, F-AOCC, F-ANNC and F-AOCA.

The Rumanian government was keen to take over control of civil aviation and ordered the merger of SARTA and LARES to form a new State-controlled airline company under the name of LARES. On 21 July 1937 the re-organization was completed and the new LARES was formed absorbing SARTA and the old LARES. The SARTA-fleet was taken over by the new LARES during July 1937.

¹⁸ Rumania and Türkiye concluded on 3 June 1939 an air treaty, allowing LARES to start up air service on the city of Istanbul. This service could be operated three times weekly in both directions. LARES operated the service by the fast Lockheed L-10A Electra.

¹⁹ AMAE, Conv 8T1 [Report no. 35896/6.VI.1939].

²⁰ AMAE, Conv 8T1 [Telegram no. 400/26.III.1940].

with the purpose of promoting air tourism, Romanian airplanes, as well as Romanian aviation in general.

Romanian pilots were obliged to stop in Istanbul (Yeşilköy) and Adana for customs formalities. For refueling or in case of emergency they could land at Eskişehir or Konya. The request for over flight permission had to be made at least two weeks in advance through the Romanian Embassy in Türkiye. Also, the Romanian pilots had to avoid the no-fly zones in Türkiye.

For the present study I have chosen a few flights and their impressions of aviation or daily life in Türkiye.

2.A. Romanian air tour over Africa (*București—Malakal, 22 October-17 November 1933*)

In 1933, Mihai Pantazi, Gheorghe Davidescu, Alexandru Cernătescu²¹, Petre Ivanovici, Max Manolescu and the mechanic D. Ploieșteanu flying three ICAR—M 23b²² planes, carried out the first Romanian intercontinental flight over the distance Bucharest—Malakal (Sudan). Although the initial target had been Capetown²³, the flight had to be interrupted at Malakal due to unfavorable weather conditions and because the flying fields had become impracticable after the rains.

ICAR—M 23b was the first plane produced by the ICAR Factory of Bucharest, under a Messerschmitt M-23 licence. On a timber structure, art of the plane was covered by plywood and part of it by fabric. The ICAR—M 23b was also extensively used by the civilian flying school of Romania. It was also always seen at the air meets of the time. The highly popular Silver Squadron as the ICAR—M 23b plane of the ARPA Association were called took up very many people who wanted to have their first experience of air travel. Very good performances were obtained by this type of aircraft thanks to its successful structure and good flying qualities. In 1932, Mihail Pantazi and Gheorghe Grozea,

²¹ Alexandru Cernescu, George Davidescu, Paul Baltagi, *Avioane românești străbat Africa*, București, ed. Militară, 1975, passim.

²² **ICAR—M23b**: span 11.50 m, length 6.50 m, height 2.00 m, empty weight 375 kg., total eight 700 kg., 80-HP Siemens Halske SH 13 B engine, maximum speed 1,70 km./h, cruising speed 150 km./h, minimum speed 80 km./h, maximum ceiling 3,800 m, endurance 5h30 min, cf. Ion Gudju, Gheorghe Iacobescu, Ovidiu Ionescu, op.cit.p. 129.

²³ Raidul București—Capetown. Decolarea se va face azi (Curentul, 23.X.1933); Raidul african al unei escadrile române. Reîntoarcerea aviatorilor în Capitală (Dimineața, 20.XI.1933).

flying an ICAR—M 23b with floats and additional fuel tanks, set up a world endurance record for light seaplanes, flying for 12 hours and 2 minutes.

Through the efforts of the Under-Secretariat of Air Force, the fuel necessary for the tour was provided by the *Astra Română* Refinery and delivered by Shell. Shell also provided the documentation: air guides, newsletters and weather forecasts.

On October 22, 1933, they took off from Băneasa Airport to Istanbul. They flew over the restricted area of Çatalca without realizing it. Because of the bad weather they stopped in Istanbul, where they visited the Galata Tower, the Pera district, Taksim Square, the ruins of the Valens Aqueduct, Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace, the Turkish and Islamic Arts Museum, the Military Museum, the Grand Bazaar, and different mosques²⁴.

On 25 October, they could hardly manage to fly over the Taurus Mountains, through a saddle at the height of 1,750 meters, which is the ceiling that loaded aircraft can reach. Then they reached the Mediterranean above Silifke (Mersin). After that they flew over Mersin and had the customs formalities carried out at Adana. In Adana they waited 45 minutes for customs formalities. While they waited for the stamps, two donkeys approached the planes and began, “without shame, to scratch themselves on the Romanian planes”²⁵. The Turkish authorities “kind and honest apologized for the delay”²⁶. After flying around the Gulf of Alexandretta they landed at Aleppo.

On November 15, they return on the route Aleppo — Adana — Eskişehir. After 5 hours Romanian pilots arrived in Eskişehir, where “the Turkish pilots receive us with obvious sympathy, quickly named us like binbaşı (major) or yüzbaşı (captain), according to ranks. At the hotel where we are staying, two Englishmen and two Frenchmen have been living for two months or more, bored to death. They are the representatives of aeronautical factories, which are negotiating with the Turkish government for the delivery of military planes. They seem delighted with our appearance. They are experienced aviators, about the same age as us, travelled to many places, communicative and cheerful by nature. The group increases with 3-4

²⁴ A.Cernescu, G.Davidescu, P.Baltagi, op.cit., p. 30-43.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 53.

²⁶ Idem.

Turkish pilots and together we spend in a good mood and spontaneous friendship. All kinds of aviation incidents, happy and tragic, from times of peace or war, are told until midnight, interrupted by Turkish snacks (sarma, köfte and koyun pastırması) accompanied by glasses of rakı and duziko²⁷ with soda.”²⁸

The flight from Eskişehir to Istanbul was a delight view considering that “the beauty of the Bilecik Defile is similar to the Olt Valley (Romania)”²⁹. They arrived in Istanbul on November 16, where they visited Eyüp and the Bosphorus Tour. They reached Bucharest on November 17.

2.B. Romanian Air Tour of Prince V. Bibescu (April 1934)

Prince V. Bibescu, commander Gh. Bănciulescu and Gh. Bănciulescu flew with a SET-41 plane on the route³⁰: Bucharest—Sofia—Istanbul — Aleppo—Gaza—Cairo—Alexandria—Bengazi—Tripoli—Tunis—Palermo—Rome—Zagreb—Belgrade—Bucharest³¹.

Air Force Major Gheorghe Bănciulescu, the first pilot in the world who piloted with artificial legs³², carried out a lightening long distance flight in 1933 (8,000 km. in 9 days) on board a SET—41.

SET—41 was specially equipped for night flying (having the necessary devices, radio, electric system for lighting and heating, flare bombs) and an air camera. The armament comprised a Vickers machine-gun through the airscrew and two Lewis machine-guns in a turret in the observer seat. Under the lower wing the SET—41 had two IAR—*Barbieri* bomb racks for six 12 kg. bombs each³³.

²⁷ **Duziko** was a drink produced until the first years of Turkish Republic. It is a drink obtained by distilling fermented fresh grapes in copper still.

²⁸ A.Cernescu, G.Davidescu, P.Baltagi, op.cit., p. 106.

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ Cercurile aeronautice oficiale au oferit mai multe recepții în onoarea d-lui Bibescu, președintele Federației Aeronautice Internaționale (Curentul, 14.IV.1934).

³¹ *** Istoria aviației ..., p. 181.

³² Gh. Bănciulescu 's legs had to be amputated after a very serious aviation accident he had in 1927 in the Tatra Mountains of Czechoslovakia.

³³ **SET—41** : span 9.80 m, wing area 26.60 sq.m., empty weight 868 kg., total weight 1,322 kg., 380HP Gnôme-Rhône 7K engine, maximum speed 202 km./h, speed at 2,000 m 191 km./h, minimum speed 87 km/h, maximum ceiling 5,800 m, climb to 2,000 m 9 min. 25 sec., climb to 5,000 m 42 min. cf. Ion Gudju, Gheorghe Iacobescu, Ovidiu Ionescu, op.cit., p. 127.

I. Sami, a member of the Istanbul Aviation Committee, came to the General Consulate of Romania in Istanbul communicating that he had received instructions from the Central Aviation Committee in Ankara to consider Mr. V. Bibescu and his companions as official guests³⁴. Prince V. Bibescu arrived in Istanbul on April 10, 1934, being greeted by the director of the Turkish Aviation Committee³⁵. They stayed at Pera Palace. The Romanian consulate in Istanbul offered a reception in honor of the Romanian aviators, and the next day they continued their journey to Eskişehir—Konya—Aleppo—Damascus—Cairo³⁶.

2.C. The Visit of Turkish Aviators to Romania (May 1934)

Radu Irimescu, the Air Force Undersecretary, offered a breakfast at the Central House of the Army in honor of Turkish aviators³⁷.

Lt. col. Celal declared that he was to meet first time with “our comrades, the heroic Romanian aviators, which was the object of our desire for a long time. We hope that this first contact will be the beginning of very frequent and much supported relationships from us”³⁸. Turkish aviators flew from Sinop to Sevastopol—Bucharest *via* Odesa. The Royal Aeroclub of Romania gave a reception in honor of the aviators and established the Ankara—Bucharest Cup for Turkish and Romanian military aviators. General Sichițiu pinned the badge of the Romanian aviators on the chest of the Turkish aviators³⁹. The Turkish pilots visited the Pipera airfield where the Romanian officers performed various flights, and together with the Turkish military attaché they visited the aircraft factory in Brașov⁴⁰.

³⁴ AMAE, fond ANKARA, vol. 85 [Report no. 738/24.III.1934].

³⁵ Loc.cit. [Report no 871/11.IV.].

³⁶ Prens Bibesko şerefine ziyafetler (Vakit, 12.IV.1934); Prens Bibesko Mısır'a hareket etti (Cumhuriyet, 13.IV.1934); Prens Bibesko dün tayyaresile Bükreş'ten geldi (Vakit, 11.IV.1934); Prens Bibesko Eskişehir Muhabirimize, memleketimiz hakkında yeni intibalarını anlattı (Son Posta, 15.IV.1934).

³⁷ Tayyare filomuz. Dün şehrimizden geçerek Eskişehir'e gitti (Vakit, 19.V.1934); Rusya'dan dönem hava filomuz. Bükreş'te çok samini meraasimle karşılandı (Cumhuriyet, 15.V.1934); Tayyarecilerimiz Romanya'da (Vakit, 16.V. 1934); Bükreş Romanya hükûmeti tayyarecilerimize nişan verdi (Vakit, 17.V.1934).

³⁸ Aviatorii turci în Capitală. Dejunul de la Cercul Militar (Universul, 19.V.1934).

³⁹ Aviatori români în capitală. S-a instituit o cupă pentru ruta Ankara—București și retur (Curentul, 18.V.1934).

⁴⁰ Vizita aviatorilor turci la Brașov (Curentul, 17.V.1934).

2.D. Romanian Air Tours over Africa (Bucharest— Capetown, 14 April - 25 May 1935)

The six participants in the air tour were Lieutenant colonel Alexandru Cernescu, Lieutenant colonel George Davidescu, Lieutenant colonel Mihail Pantazi, colonel Gheorghe Jienescu, Captain Gheorghe Olteanu and the aircraft technician Anton Stengher. The crews were formed in such a way that in each of them there was a participant of the 1933 air tour. Davidescu and Jienescu were on board the YR-ACK, Cernescu and Olteanu, on board the YR-ACL, while Pantazi and Stenger flew the YR-ACM.

ICAR—Universal (1934)⁴¹ was successfully used by civilian and military flying schools, especially as a primary training plane.

Its structural qualities and flying performances were confirmed by the long-distance flight carried out by three I.C.A.R.—Universal planes in 1935 from Bucharest to Capetown (11,500 km.

Three mass-produced planes belonging to the squadrons of the Air Force schools were chosen for this difficult long-distance flight, full of meteorological difficulties resulting from the variety of the regions that had to be covered. The factory which had built the planes made several improvements and changes, among them a modification in the fuel tanks, increasing flight endurance from three hours to eight hours and a half, and the provisions of specific equipment needed for the flight over the African continent. Although the weight of the aircraft was thereby increase by more than 150 kg., the flight performances were not affected. The long-distance flight of the three I.C.A.R.—Universal planes were fully successful, representing one of the most notable achievements of Romanian-made aircraft⁴².

In Eskişehir, they landed at the Turkish military airfield and in a hurry to fill up with gas. They are not spared a long wait because the agent of the

⁴¹ **ICAR—Universal** : Span 11.90 m, length 6.90 m, height 1.95, wing area 14.30 sq.m., empty weight 465 kg., total weight 710 kg., 130-de Havilland-Gipsy Major engine, maximum speed 195 km./h, cruising speed 160 km./h, maximum ceiling 5,500 m, climb to 3,000 m. 12 min. 30 sec., endurance 3 hours, cf., Ion Gudju, Gheorghe Iacobescu, Ovidiu Ionescu, op.cit., p. 170.

⁴² A.Cernescu, G.Davidescu, P.Baltagi, op.cit., p. 173.

Shell Company is not on the ground “while the phones are being made, the very friendly Turkish officers offered us their moral support and offered coffees for three hours”⁴³. They flew without a stop from Eskişehir to Adana and stayed at the Törin Klop Hotel.

They returned from Cairo on 22 May, but they encountered another problem: at Adana they found out that the upper struts of the unlucky YR-ACK aircraft's fuselage were cracked. They improvised a patching and, in order not to overload the aircraft's tail.

At 8.30 they arrived at the Eskişehir military airfield. They introduce themselves to the commander who invited them to breakfast, an invitation accepted with pleasure by the Romanian aviators. Romanian pilots told the Turkish commander about the rudimentary repair done to the plane. They got the approval of not landing in Istanbul, and had the customs formalities carried out at Eskişehir. The approval that “given to them as exceptional way, because in matters of this kind, the Turkish authorities were very strict”⁴⁴.

They reached Băneasa Airoport on 25 May, 1935. Altogether, the air tour lasted for 27 days, 149 hours and 10 minutes, of which the 23,000 km of actual flight were flown in 73 hours and 5 minutes. The flight in Africa was considered one of the greatest successes of the Romanian aviation⁴⁵.

2.E. The Romanian Air Tour of Commander Negrescu's Squadron

(Bucharest—Istanbul—Eskişehir—Ankara—Istanbul—Bucharest, 30 septembrie- 2 octombrie 1935)

In 1935, seven Air Force SET—31 planes under the command of the Air Force Lt. Col. Gheorghe Negrescu⁴⁶ (B.Sc.Eng.) carried out a flight on the Bucharest—Istanbul—Eskişehir—Ankara—Istanbul—Bucharest route.

The SET—31⁴⁷ had a timber frame and fabric cover. It was

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 121.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 210.

⁴⁵ Ion Gudju, Gheorghe Iacobescu, Ovidiu Ionescu, op.cit., p. 170-173.

⁴⁶ Romen uçak filosu dün geldi (Kurun, 27.IX.1935); Hava müşteşarlığı, Romen uçmanları adına bir şölen verdi (Ulusal Birlik, 1.X.1935); Romen uçakçılar (Halkın Sesi, 30.IX.1935); Romen uçakları. Genel Kurmay Başkanı Fevzi Çakmak tarafından kabul edildi (Yeni Asır, 2.X. 1935); Romen uçakçılartı (Ulus, 27.IX.1935); Yedi Romen Süel Uçağı Ankara'ı ziyaret edecek (Tan, 22.IX.1935); Romen uçakları Ankara'da (Akşam, 1.X.1935); Romen Tayarecileri geliyor (Tan, 24.IX. 1935); Romen uçakları ant önünde (Tan, 2.X.1935).

designed for training of pilots who were transferred from training to fighting planes. The SET—31 was mass-produced and set up several remarkable performances. In 1931 a SET—31 made a long-range flight to Poland, converging 2,300 km in 11 flying hours. In 1933 a plane of the same type covered a distance of 18,000 km on a route including 13 towns of Europe. Between May 1 and 4, 1931, three Romanian crews participate with SET—31 planes in an international aviation competition held at Plzen in Czechoslovakia; the others crews were nine Czechoslovak, three German and one Swiss. The Romanian pilots took part in all the three tests of the competition (regularity, speed and aerobatics), placing first in the team raking and first and third in the general individual rankings.

The Romanian air tour in Türkiye was made as a result of the invitation made by the Turkish military aviators⁴⁸. Feridun Dirimtekin, the vice-president of the Turkish Aeronautical League, sent to the Romanian Legation in Ankara an envelope with 12 photo albums and 18 copies of *Havacılık ve Spor* magazine to be given to the aviators who took part in the squadron raid, and a letter showing that “the visit of the brave Romanian aviators will remain unforgettable in Türkiye”⁴⁹.

On September 27, 1935, the Romanian Legation in Ankara offered a reception in the honor of the Romanian aviators at the Ankara Palace Hotel where Turkish officials were invited, as well as a banquet offered by the Undersecretary of State for Air Forces⁵⁰. They were received by Fevzi Çakmak, Chief of Staff, and Kâzım Özalp, Minister of National Defense where they received a gold watch engraved with President Atatürk’s signature.

⁴⁷ SET—31 : Span 9.80 m, length 7.20 m, height 3.15, wing area 26.60 sq.m., empty weight 826 kg., total weight 1,120 kg., 230 HP Salmson 9 Ab engine, maximum speed 215 km./h, speed at 2,000 m 198 km./h, minimum speed 80 km./h, maximum ceiling 6,000 m, climb to 2,000 m 6 min 20 sec, endurance 2 hours 54 min, take-off run 85 m, landing run 160 m, cf. Ion Gudju, Gheorghe Iacobescu, Ovidiu Ionescu, Romanian Aeronautical Constructions(1905-1974), p. 118.

⁴⁸ Raidul spre Ankara va începe mâine dimineața (Viitorul, 27.IX.1935); Ion Gudju, Gheorghe Iacobescu, Ovidiu Ionescu, Romanian Aeronautical Constructions :1905-1974, Military Publishing House, Bucharest, 1974, p. 118; Natura, no 9/1939.

⁴⁹ AMAE, fond ANKARA, vol. 86 [Report no 1598-7/26.X. 1935].

⁵⁰ Ankara’dan: (Kurun, 2.IX.1935); Romen tayyareleri geliyor (Tan, 26.IX. 1935).

2.F. The First Flight from Istanbul to Bucharest by Devlet Hava Yolları (State Airlines) (August 30, 1937)

On August 30, 1937, a DH.86B/Dragon Express plane piloted by Tahye from Istanbul arrived at Băneasa Airport with several Turkish tourists on board⁵¹. Atatürk's adopted daughter, Prof. Afet Inan, came on this plane to attend the 10-day international anthropology conference in Bucharest. Atatürk went to Yesilköy to meet upon her return to the country⁵².

2.G. Two Exceptional Women: Irina Burnaia and Sabiha Gökçen

Romanian pilot Irina Burnaia and Türkiye

In 1935, pilot Petre Ivanovici and sports flyer Miss Irina Burnaia took a IAR—22 to Africa, to the northern shore of Lake Victoria at Entebbe (Uganda). During this long-distance flight both the plane and the engine—built under license by the IAR works—proved to be very good .

I.A.R.-22⁵³ is two-seater dual-controlled plane had the wing's frame formed of two boxed spars, made of spruce and with veneer webs. The leading edge and the entire surface of the central wing-section were veneer covered, the rest of the wings begging fabric covered. The fuselage, of the lattice girder type, was made of the spruce and the engine support was made of welded steel pipes. The tail unit had the same timber structure. Its fixed parts were covered by veneer and the mobile parts in fabrics. Its fixed parts were covered by veneer and the mobile parts in fabric. The undercarriage had oil-pneumatic shock-absorbers of the Cleveland type and mechanical brakes. The IAR-type airscrew was made by timber.

On January 3, 1935, Irina Burnaia⁵⁴ and Petre Ivanovici left the Băneasa Airfield, and on January 4 they left Istanbul for Eskişehir⁵⁵. On the way, very

⁵¹ Liniă aeriană București—Istanbul (Universul, 30.VIII.1937); Vești aviatice (Universul, 2.IX.1937); Profesör Afet dün tayyare ile Bükreş'e gitti (Akşam, 31.VIII.1937).

⁵² Türk tayyarelerinin harice ilk seferi (Son Posta, 31.VIII.1937); Bayan Afet'in riyaseti altındaki heyet tayyare ile Bükreş'e döndü (Son Posta, 7.IX.1937); Bayan Afet tayyare ile Bükreş'e gitti (Tan, 31.VIII.1937); Bükreş konferansından sonra Profesör Afet dün tayyare ile avdet etti (Cumhuriyet, 7.VII.1937).

⁵³ **I.A.R.-22** : span 11.53 m., length 7.50 m., height 2.02 m., ing area 20.80 sq.m., empty weight 647 kg., total weight 880 kg., 130-HP D.H. Gypsy Motor engine, maximum speed 193 km./h., minimum speed 73 km./h, maximum ceiling 5,000 m., climb to 1,000 m. 5 sec., maximum range 550 km., cf. Ion Gudju, Gheorghe Iacobescu, Ovidiu Ionescu, op.cit., p. 166.

⁵⁴ Irina Burnaia, Aripile mele – memoriei lui Petre Ivanovici, Cartea Românească, 1937, passim.

⁵⁵ AMAE, fond ANKARA, vol. 86 [Nota MAS turc no 362-7/23.III.1935].

close to Adapazarı⁵⁶, the IAR-22 plane broke its propeller, shattered the plywood under the right wing and broke a gas tank. The two spent a whole day almost frozen under the wing of the plane when the local authorities showed up and took them to the hotel⁵⁷. With the help of a cart with two buffaloes and ten people, they managed to take the plane from the field, disassemble it and transport it to a military factory in Eskişehir where they waited for the propeller from the Brașov Factory⁵⁸. On 27 January they flew to Konya⁵⁹, and the next day to Adana and Aleppo⁶⁰.

They reached Băneasa Airport back at 4.00 in the 24 March afternoon. The air tour lasted for 80 days as a whole, out of which only 16 days of flight, the rest being delays. In total, they flew over 12,000 km.

Also, Irina Burnaia carried out an air tour on the Bucharest—Balcic—Istanbul—Ankara—Istanbul—Bucharest (October 21 - November 1, 1937) with a YR-INA plane⁶¹. He stayed in Ankara between October 22 and October 24, 1937. She met in Ankara with Sabiha Gökçen⁶².

Romanian pilot carried out an air tour on the Bucharest—Bagdad (11 March- 2 April 1938). Irina Burnaia mentioned that Eskişehir had “a civilized airfield arranged for the comfort of the staff and travellers: rooms with beds, a dining room, a tennis court, a ping pong room, a cinematograph, everything of exemplary cleanliness and in total opposition to the appearance of the town”⁶³.

Visit of Atatürk's Daughter to Bucharest: Pilot Sabiha Gökçen (June 20-23, 1938)

Sabiha Gökçen participated in the international air meeting organized by the Romanian Aviation Propaganda Society (ARPA) on Băneasa Airport. It

⁵⁶ Romanya'lı tayyareciler Adapazarı'da yere indi. Tayyareler sakatlandı, tamir için Eskişehir'e gönderildi (Anadolu Gazetesi, 11.I.1935).

⁵⁷ Constantin Ucrain, Dumitru Crăciun-Iași, Raiduri aeriene românești, Junimea, Iași, 1988, p. 178.

⁵⁸ AMAE, fond ANKARA, vol. 86 [Report no 88-7/25.I. 1935].

⁵⁹ Echipajul Irina Burnaia - Ivanovici și-a reluat zborul (Universul, 30.I.1935).

⁶⁰ Echipajul Irina Burnaia—Ivanovici și-a reluat zborul. Nu timpul rău, ci o pană seacă de ulei a provocat aterizarea forțată (Universul, 30.I.1935).

⁶¹ Irina Burnaia la Ankara (Adevărul, 27.X.1937); Banchet la Ankara în cinstea aviatoroarei Irina Burnaia (Universul, 28.X.1937); Raidul d-rei Irina Burnaia (Curentul, 29.X.1937); Bir Romen kadın tayyareci geldi. Bayan Erina Burnaya (Ulus, 24.X.1937); Romen kadın tayyarecisi şerefine verilen yemek (Ulus, 25.X.1937).

⁶² AMAE, fond ANKARA, vol. 86 [Report no 1701-7/ 6. XI.1937].

⁶³ Povestea unui raid de prof. George Ținta (Buna Vestire, 13.IV.1938).

carried out an air tour of the Balkan capitals: Istanbul — Athens — Thessaloniki — Sofia — Belgrade — Bucharest. Marina Ştirbey⁶⁴ mentioned to the Romanian press that “Sabiha Gökçen is a distinguished aviator who has earned a well-deserved fame and I visited her in Türkiye”⁶⁵.

Suphy Tanrıöver declared to the Romanian press that Türkiye allocates significant sums to endow aviation, and the civil organization (Türkküşu) collects the necessary funds from the population to support the Turkish aviation. The Turkish minister also mentioned “the fact that a special school was created for the training of pilots, mechanics and engineers, which was also visited by Prince Gh. V. Bibescu”⁶⁶.

Romanian journalists asked Sabiha Gökçen how women were viewed in the beginning when they started different professions. Turkish pilot said that “Turkish women gained respect through professionalism” and that she “would like to die in the military uniform”⁶⁷. Ambassador Suphy Tanrıöver organized a dinner in honor of Sabiha Gökçen⁶⁸.

The Turkish pilot talked with the Romanian aviators and visited the aircraft factory in Buzau. Sabiha Gökçen returned to Türkiye on June 21, 1938⁶⁹.

As a conclusion, this study represents a page in the history of Romanian and Turkish aviation. I have highlighted many technical data, but equally important is the fact that the Romanian and Turkish pilots have united in their passion for flying: “we spend in a good mood and spontaneous friendship together with Turkish pilots. All kinds of aviation incidents, happy and tragic, from times of peace or war, are told until midnight... ”.

⁶⁴ Atatürk kızı Sabiha Gökçen. Romanyadaki büyük alâka (Ulus, 16.VI.1938); Sabiha Gökçen Balkan hava turu (Tan, 16.VI.1938).

⁶⁵ O scurtă convorbire cu d-ra Marina Ştirbey (România, 19.VI.1938).

⁶⁶ cf. Annex.

⁶⁷ Nu voi părăsi până la moarte acest costum militar— spune tânăra aviatore d-ra Sabiha Gokcen (România, 22.VI.1938).

⁶⁸ Salutul aviatorelor române pentru femeia turcă modernă (România, 19.VI.1938); Nu voi părăsi până la moarte acest costum militar (România, 22.VI.1938).

⁶⁹ Bayan Sabiha Gökçen Bugün Bükreş'ten Geliyor (Akşam, 21.VI.1938) ; Bayan Sabiha Gökçen Dün 17.30'da Geldi (Akşam, 22.VI.1938); Aviatoreea Sabiha Gokcen a vizitat aerodromul Buzău (România, 23.VI.1938).

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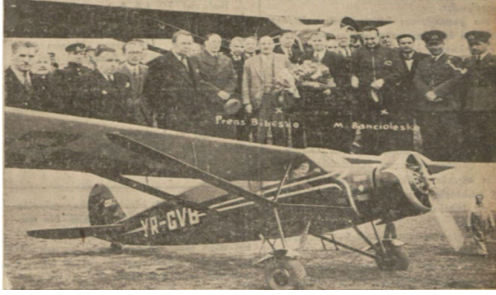
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ANNEX

Prens Bibesko dün geldi

Kendi tayyaresile gelen Beynelmilel Hava Federasyonu Reisi merasimle karşılandı



Prince V.Bibescu,
Gh. Bănculescu, Ekrem
Bey,
Hasan Fehmi Bey,
Salâhattin Bey and
V.Anastasiu,
Alex. Ghica

Cumhuriyet
(11.IV. 1934)

**Prens Bibesko Başbakanımız
ve Doktor Tevfik Rüştü
Aras tarafından kabul edildi**



Prens Bibesko Türküştü talebeleri arasında

Ulus
(29.v.1938)



Prens Bibesko pilot mektebinde

**İstanbul - Bükreş hava
hattı dün açıldı**
İlk tayyare ile Prens Bibesko ve Romanya
Münakalât Nezareti mümessilleri gittiler



Rumen Hava Nezareti mümessillerile havaçlarımız, dün Yeşilköy hava meydanında bir arada..

Opening of the
Bucharest—İstanbul
airline

Cumhuriyet
(6.VI. 1939)

UNDER THE BLUE SKY: THE SIGNING OF THE ROMANIAN-TURKISH AIRLINES CONVENTION FOR THE REALIZATION OF REGULAR FLIGHTS BETWEEN BUCHAREST AND ISTANBUL (JUNE 3, 1939)



Sabiha Gökçen together with Suphy Tanrıöver on the Baneasa airfield

Realitatea Ilustrată
(no 596/ 22.VI.1938)

Fiica Președintelui Republicii turce în Capitală



Sabiha Gökçen, Suphi Tanrıöver, Sırrı Oktem, İzet Medeni Camil, I. Bastaki, Scarlat Rădulescu, Gh. Boian, Marina Ştirbei, Irina Burnaia

Universul
(21.VI.1938)

Sosirea pe aerodromul Băneasa a fiicei adoptive a președintelui republicii turce

Misafir Rumen uçmanları dün Ankaradan geldiler

Atatürk misafirlere birer altın saat hediye etti, 'çaklar bugün Bükreşe hareket edecekler'



Solda yukarıda misafirlere Rumeli İstihlal İnce, mülhuse ve Türk kurucuları ile birer altın saat hediye etti. Ortada Rumeli İstihlal İnce, mülhuse ve Türk kurucuları ile birer altın saat hediye etti. Sağda Rumeli İstihlal İnce, mülhuse ve Türk kurucuları ile birer altın saat hediye etti.

Cumhuriyet
(3.X.1935)



Squadron of five
Turkish planes at
Băneasa airport

Realitatea Ilustrată

(no 382/ 20.V.1934)