FRENCH CULTURAL DIPLOMACY ON THE BALKANS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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The study examines French cultural diplomacy, an element of the policy of maintaining influence, in Eastern Europe and the Balkans after the Second World War, with an emphasis on the 1940s and 1950s (as part of a larger study covering the entire Cold War period). The article reveals what strategies Paris used depending on the national specificities of the targeted country. Parallels and differences are pointed out with particular examples cited. It traces how the different countries have responded to the modus operandi of French cultural diplomacy, which has been undertaken with extraordinary dynamism in the region.

Keywords: French Cultural Diplomacy, Cold War, Eastern Europe, Balkans.

The French cultural expansion dates back to the 16th century, later the elite valued the ideas of the Enlightenment as universal and started to "export" them, aiming to include all humanity in them and harmonize thinking and international communication. After 1789, their place was taken by the ideas of the French Revolution. This political line with scientific and educational elements led to overlapping of diplomacy and intelligentsia – from the 16th century philosophers, writers, and scientists were sent to represent France.

French diplomacy took care to legally ensure the inviolability of its cultural institutions. In 1535, a treaty was concluded with the Sublime porte for the protection of the Christian population, the French language and culture on the territory of the Ottoman Empire, renewed in 1801.[1] The agreements created a favorable environment for the development of French cultural influence.

In the second half of the 19th century, schools of French religious congregations opened in the Ottoman Empire. Although religious education was abolished in France in 1905, given the importance of these institutions for the spread of the influence of French language and culture, their subsidy from the government continued, and in this respect Central and Eastern Europe ranked with the highest priority.[2] Children and young people of any nationality and religion

[1] Ph. Lane, *Présence française dans le monde. L'action culturelle et scientifique*, Paris, 2016, p. 9, 15, 17.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

could enroll in them, but Catholic teaching wasn't a compulsory subject[3], to put it in another way, the emphasis was placed on learning the French language and promoting French political, scientific and philosophic ideas.

Another, initially unofficial, channel of French cultural influence was the non-governmental organization Alliance Française, established in 1883 in Paris with the mission to further the study of the French language as a means of getting to know French culture. After the First World War, France founded a network of French Institutes and started to participate in the financing of the Alliances.

In the 1930s, given the increasing German militarism and revanchism, the Alliance Française used specific messages into the public events organized by the society. It began to emphasize the image of France as a supporter of peace, as opposed to countries that radiated a threat, and François Chaubet believes that it was exactly this to which the great success of the Alliance Française in Eastern Europe and the Balkans was due.[4] Another method of more closely representing French culture, academic and technical thought was the "*book policy*" (but not only, periodicals as well), books that were donated by the French government to teachers and libraries, including those of the French Institutes and the Alliances.[5] An increase in "traditional" events – concerts, exhibitions, theatrical plays, university exchanges, etc., was also planned.[6]

The Second World War wasn't over when Paris, in August 1944, was liberated. A French government was formed and it resumed its role to guarantee European security, including on the Balkans, in view that every contradictory region could trigger another conflict. On the other hand, the Soviets, the Americans and the British already had shown their intention to assume the responsibility of designing the new European order. Thus France hastened to reconcile with its traditional partners.[7] Paris undertook successive regularization of its relations with Romania (March 1945), Yugoslavia (August 1945), Bulgaria (November 1945) and Albania (December 1945).[8] Relations with the southern Balkan countries were

[3] R. Zaïmova, "Le français en Bulgarie dans le contexte de la politique culturelle de la France aux XIX^{e} et XX^{e} siècles", *Documents pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde*, 38–39, 2007, p. 151.

[4] Fr. Chaubet, "L'Alliance française ou la diplomatie de la langue (1883–1914)", *Revue historique*, 632, 2004, 4, p. 777.

[5] A. Guénard, "Réflexions sur une diplomatie culturelle de la France", *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 65–66, 2002, p. 23, 25; idem, "La politique culturelle française vis-à-vis des Etats Balkaniques dans l'entre-deux-guerres", *Balkan Studies*, 29, 1988, no. 1, p. 152; C. Defrance, "La « Maison du Livre français» à Berlin (1923–1933) et la politique française du livre en Allemagne", in H.M. Bock & G. Krebs (dir.). *Échanges culturels et relations diplomatiques: présences françaises à Berlin au temps de la République de Weimar*, Paris. 2005, p. 172.

[6] A. Guénard, "Réflexions sur une diplomatie culturelle…", p. 25, 27.

[7] Idem, "De la reconstruction à l'éviction. Entre 1944 et 1949, une politique culturelle française en Europe centrale et orientale confrontée à l'organisation du Bloc communiste", *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 36, 1994, p. 21.

[8] P. Nathanaili, "L'Albanie dans la confrontation Ouest-Est 1944–1948", *Revue Historique*, 298, 1997, 2, p. 341; S. Pavelescu, "Entre suspicion et confidence : les relations franco-roumaines dans les deux

complicated. Greece was suspicious of leftist France, where Gaullists ruled along with communists and socialists.[9] Turkey was gripped by strong anti-Soviet sentiment, and the December 1944 alliance treaty between France and the USSR soured bilateral relations until the establishment of NATO.[10]

Paris didn't undermine its efforts to restore and/or maintain French influence even though the country was severely exhausted economically by the war. The position of cultural attaché at the diplomatic representations was created[11] and prominent intellectuals were appointed to that post such as Roland Barthes[12] in Romania. The writer Romain Gary[13] was a counselor and secretary in the French legation in Bulgaria. This decision represents the continuity in the tradition of the Age of Enlightenment, when highly respected scholars and artists were engaged in the mission of spreading French ideas and values.

The renewal of the functioning of French cultural institutions, completely suspended with the start of hostilities in some places or with fewer activities in other, began. The French Institute in the Romanian capital Bucharest resumed its work. The French cultural institutions in Bulgaria didn't stop to run during the war, but they handled the situation in limited material conditions. Even before the signing of the Armistice Agreement, on October 25, 1944, French diplomacy noted: "*It is recommended to immediately renew intellectual influence, strengthen French positions and respond without delay to any request of the Bulgarian society*."[14] In the academic year 1946/1947, there were 3,000 students studying French language at the French Institute and Alliance Française in Bulgaria. French religious schools covered another 10,000 youngsters.[15] To put it in another way, in just one year after the end of the world military conflict, the enrollments in these institutions reached the pre-war level, which was indicative of the traditional Francophilia and interest in French culture, history and civilization in Bulgaria, as well as of the organizational abilities and quick response (including funding) from Paris and the representatives in Sofia.

Tito's Yugoslavia created particular difficulties for French cultural institutions. In their campaign to eliminate everything labelled as "bourgeois" and "reactionary",

premières décennies de la guerre froide", *Revue historique des armées*, 244, 2006 (en ligne). URL : http://journals.openedition.org/rha/5982; K. Todić, *A Traditional Friendship? France and Yugoslavia in the Cold War World, 1944–1969*, A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, 2015, p. 41; ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/23, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1944–1949, Bulgarie, vol. 1, p. 97.

[9] M. Cheze, *La France en Grèce : étude de la politique culturelle française en territoire hellène du début des années 1930 à 1981*, Thèse de doctorat, INALCO, Paris, 2013, p. 213, 215.

[10] G. Zora, *Les relations franco-turques à l'époque du Général De Gaulle (1958–1969)*, Thèse de doctorat, Université Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2015, p. 246.

[11] Ph. Lane, *Présence française dans le monde…*, p. 22.

[12] An essayist, literary critic, philosopher, and semiotician.

[13] Born Roman Kacew, a French writer which had won the Goncourt prize.

[14] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/29, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1944–1949, Bulgarie, vol. 24, p. 7.

[15] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/16, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1949–1955, Bulgarie, vol. 47, p. 142.

the authorities refused the renewal of French religious schools and the activities of the French Institutes in Belgrade and Zagreb. The one that continued to exist in Ljubljana was closed in 1947. In the summer of 1945 a French library with a reading room was opened in Belgrade, and Paris hoped that it would grow into a French Cultural Institute in the future. By 1949, the reading room counted more than 300 readers and more than 50 borrowed books per day[16], these modest figures testifying to a fear among the population and surveillance by the secret services.

Another important characteristic of French cultural diplomacy in Eastern Europe was the organization and publication of numerous information materials filled with messages, to put it in another way, conducting an image policy, which in turn would reflect at the cultural level. The definitions "France of the Resistance" (reminiscent of the revolutionary spirit and erasing the awkward Vichy period) or "New France" came into use, which included "Left". Cultural and information activities were connected.[17]

The visits of French artists in Eastern Europe developed rapidly. A large part of the country's intellectual elite were members of the FCP or sympathized with leftist ideas, which fitted the new regimes of the East. The institutions in Paris, if not deliberately encouraging, didn't create any obstacles and tolerated the left-wing French intellectuals' invitations to visit the countries in this region.[18] The process contributed to the strengthening of trust, the invited persons also supporting the image policy of "New France", since during their meetings they talked about the post-war development of their country. The Eastern European "tour" of the writers Elsa Triolet and Louis Aragon, both members of the FCP, in 1947 was a good example in this context. In Bulgaria, they delivered lectures on the "Writer's Freedom" (Triolet) and "French Poetry" (Aragon), but also largely responded to questions about the Resistance and the post-war revival of France.[19]

In Greece and Turkey, on the contrary, the distinction from the Vichy regime was also sought, but by the continuity of the pre-war image of France, known as the country of romance, grace, freedom, and expression. Thus, in the fall of 1946, Edith Piaf gave a series of concerts in Athens, which were covered in numerous articles in the press.[20] French chanson performers had a special place in Turkey too.[21] In the North, only the "safer", classical, music was presented. Thus, the

[16] С. Илић, "Француска пропаганда у Југославији. Културна акција Француске у очима УДБ-е 1953. године", *Годишњак за друштвену историју*. Београд. 2003, № 1–3, с. 268; K. Todić, *A Traditional Friendship?*…, p. 61, 70.

[17] A. Guénard, "Réflexions sur une diplomatie…", p. 25.

[18] S. Pavelescu, "Entre suspicion et confidence…"; A. Guénard, "Réflexions sur une diplomatie…", p. 27; idem, "De la reconstruction…", p. 23.

[19] В. Чичовска, *Международна културна дейност на България, 1944–1948*, София, 1990, с. 202–203.

[20] M. Cheze, *La France en Grèce*…, p. 244.

[21] As a proof of which, see the 1947 "Made in Turkey" vynil record of Yves Montand. https://www.ebay.com/itm/185074812645 Later, their songs were translated and adapted in compliance

famous pianist Monique de la Bruchollerie, who performed in the second half of the 1930s in Eastern Europe, resumed her performances in the region in the post-war years.[22] These events indicate a flexible and adaptable French cultural diplomacy corresponding to the specific political conditions of different countries.

Alongside the practical measures on the ground, Paris resumed its traditional policy of investing in the Francophile academic and intellectual elite through granting of government scholarships for study and specialization in French universities and institutes. However, due to financial difficulties, lay-offs soon became necessary. In 1946, the French legation in Sofia expressed indignation, but Quai d'Orsay replied that the measure wasn't directed against Bulgaria.[23] This reduction actually covered all countries. In 1947 there were only 30 scholarships approved for Greece, and in 1948 – only 20.[24] In 1948, the government in Paris awarded 10 scholarships for Bulgarian students, and in 1949–7, but Sofia stopped applying.[25]

The strengthening of the French cultural influence was also carried out through written works. In 1946, the French Institute in Sofia organized an exhibition of contemporary French literature (published after 1933) – including academic papers – accompanied by a series of public lectures dedicated to various authors and genres.[26] Regular deliveries of French books, newspapers and magazines, "*of which the Bulgarian public was a big fan*", were undertaken, but due to disagreements (unspecified) with the BNB regarding the method of payment, they didn't last for long.[27] Paris renewed French Government Book Donation Program. In 1947, a special commission was created to list titles in view of the post-war changes in Eastern European countries. Its work, negotiations with publishers who had commercial interests of their own, and distribution took time, and when the listed books were finally sent in the fall of 1948 the operation was judged to be ineffective, and the program was abandoned.[28]

In the field of visual arts, French cultural diplomacy decided to continue from where it had left off: a series of exhibitions of contemporary authors in the second half of the 1930s, but by making additions in compliance with the views of the new political regimes.[29] For the exhibition entitled "Contemporary French Painting" in

with the Turkish culture: Ş. Okyayuz, & M. Kaya, "Türkçe Sözlü Hafif Batı Müziğinin Oluşumunda Fransızcadan Çevrilen Şarkılarda 'Yerli Ve Millî Aşk'a Dair", *Çeviribilim ve Uygulamaları Dergisi*, 30, 2021, p. 133–150.

[22] A. Guénard, "Art et diplomatie. La France en Pologne et en Tchécoslovaquie entre 1945 et 1951", *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, 24, 2006: https://www.pantheonsorbonne.fr/autres-structures-de-recherche/ipr/les-revues/bulletin/tous-les-bulletins/bulletin-n-24-art-et-relations-internationales/annie-guenard-art-et-diplomatie-la-france-en-pologne-et-en-tchecoslovaquie-entre-1945-et-1951.

[23] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/29, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1944–1949, Bulgarie, vol. 24, p. 130–132, 151.

[24] M. Cheze, *La France en Grèce*…, p. 230.

[25] ЦДА, ф. 1б, оп. 6, а.е. 556, л. 1; ф. 143, оп. 7, а.е. 8, л. 2; ДАМВнР, оп. 8п, а.е. 912, л. 23.

[26] В. Чичовска, *Международна културна дейност*…, с. 110.

[27] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/23, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1944–1949, Bulgarie, vol. 1, p. 131.

[28] A. Guénard, "Réflexions sur une diplomatie…", p. 26; idem, "De la reconstruction…", p. 25.

[29] Idem, "Art et diplomatie…".

Bulgaria, the works of artists performing in the fields of expressionism, post-impressionism, surrealism, cubism, etc., who were active at the first half of 20th century and later, in the post-war period, were selected. The authors were awarded prizes, some of them belonging to the prestigious School of Paris, and most – in friendly relations with communist artists (such as Pablo Picasso and André Fougeron), sympathizing with the FCP: Yves Alix, Jules Cavaillès, François Desnoyer, Jacques Despierre, Edouard Goerg, Philippe Hosiasson, André Lhote, Roger Limouse, Bernard Lorjou and his wife Yvonne Mottet, André Marchand, André Masson, Roland Oudot, Georges Rouault, Jacques Villon, Henri de Waroquier, the FCP members Albert Marquet, Fernand Léger, Édouard Pignon and Jean Lurçat (tapestry).[30] The authorities in Sofia used the exhibition to denounce decadent Western art, but the large number of visitors demonstrated that Bulgarian society didn't share this assessment.[31]

Like the selection of musical artists, the selection of works of art was also careful and thorough, considering the particular host country. In the spring of 1949, the "Exhibition of Works Offered by French Artists in Homage to Greece" was held in Athens.[32] The collection included works specially prepared for the event by André Fougeron, Henri Matisse, Marcel Gromaire, François Desnoyer, Georges Braque, Léopold Survage and others. The leading theme was the Greek Resistance during the Second World War. After the end of the exhibition the works were donated to the Greek government.[33]

Paris also attached great importance to the presentation of French theatre, although sending troupes required substantial funding. Indeed, sensitive funds must have been needed, since, for example, the theatre of Louis Jouvet ("Théâtre de l'Athénée") in the spring and summer of 1948 gave performances in Poland and Czechoslovakia[34], which are closer to France, but didn't reach Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. As the case studies of the scholarships and the Book Donation Program have shown, resources became increasingly limited, as well as the freedom of action. Actually, it should be pointed out that in 1946–1958, only 0.13 % of the state budget was allocated to culture[35]. Anne Dulphy makes the harsh summary that Paris was conducting a *policy of the weak*[36]. French diplomacy drew grand plans for the organization of impressive and memorable cultural events, the macro-framework, however, was not targeted this way.

[30] *Изложба „Съвременна френска живопис"*. София. Януари 1949. 72 с.

[31] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/23, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1946–1950, Bulgarie, vol. 2, p. 44–45.

[32] *Exposition des oeuvres offertes par des artistes français en hommage à la Grèce du 17 au 29 avril 1949*, Athènes, 1949, 130 p.

[33] L. Arnoux-Farnoux, "Relations intellectuelles et artistiques entre la France et la Grèce au XX^{e} siècle. L'action de deux philhellènes, Octave Merlier (1897–1976) et Roger Milliex (1913–2006)", *Rives Méditerranéennes*, 50, 2015, p. 53–64. https://journals.openedition.org/rives/4798

[34] A. Guénard, "Art et diplomatie…".

[35] E. Négrier, *Le ministère de la culture et la politique culturelle en France : exception culturelle ou exception institutionnelle ?*, Montpellier, 2017, 22 p. https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01442310

[36] A. Dulphy, "Introduction", A. Dulphy, R. Frank, M.-A. Matard-Bonucci, et P. Ory (dir.). *Les relations culturelles internationales au XX^{e} siècle. De la diplomatie culturelle à l'acculturation*. Bruxelles, 2010, p. 27.

At the end of 1947, in the Soviet sphere countries, the "Zhdanovisme" was launched. This was a resistance ideological movement against the harmful bourgeois influence. The subsequent actions also affected French cultural institutions. Romania ordered its delegation to withdraw from the bilateral cultural commission in Paris, and starting at the spring of 1948 up to the fall of the same year all French cultural institutions in the country were closed.[37]

In Bulgaria, on the contrary, the Alliance Française and the French Institute continued to function unimpeded. As Quai d'Orsay wrote, "*This behavior is mainly explained by the fact that France has many friends in all strata of the Bulgarian society, even among the Communist Party, and it is impossible for a country to tear off once its cultural presence is still so profound in Bulgaria*."[38]

However, a threat loomed over French religious schools after the authorities in Sofia announced their intention to introduce secular (and state-controlled) education in Bulgaria. On August 2, 1948, the National Assembly Presidium denounced the School Agreement of 1936 and, according to the notice period provided for in it, the colleges could operate another 9 months, but only for non-Bulgarian students. The French legation suggested that the closure was intended under external pressure and such moves didn't meet the public opinion, as well as that of some of the ruling authorities.[39]

In fact, this step shall not be regarded as precedent. Religious education was abolished in Turkey in 1924, and recalcitrant schools were closed. In 1936, it was decreed that primary education should be completed in a Turkish public school, and secondary education could be continued in a foreign school, however, Turkish language, History, Geography and Civics should be taught in the Turkish language and by a Turkish teacher.[40] In Greece, the Papandreou Law of 1931 provided that no children of the Orthodox faith could be permitted to conclude their primary education in other religious schools. Moreover, the Cultural agreement with France of 1938 allowed no religious education at all. It is likely that the schools were preserved by being secularized, as in 1945 the ban on education in "other religious schools" was extended to children up to the age of 14, and in 1948 the ambassador Vaux Saint Cyr wrote of *certain xenophobia*. On the other hand, after the closure of the Italian, German and Romanian institutions, there was a strong influx of students to the Alliance Française and the French Institute, their total number at the end of the 1940s reaching about 18,000 students, later reducing to 10,000 in 1952, due to financial difficulties and the reduction of courses.[41].

[37] S. Pavelescu, "Entre suspicion et confidence… "; A. Guénard, "De la reconstruction…", p. 25.

[38] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/28, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1944–1949, Bulgarie, vol. 20, p. 179.

[39] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/23, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1946–1950, Bulgarie, vol. 2, p. 40.

[40] E. Aksoy, "Les Établissements d'enseignement français en Turquie des origines à nos jours", *Synergies Turquie*, 12, 2019, p. 42–43.

[41] M. Cheze, *La France en Grèce…*, p. 269 ; A. Dulphy, "Enseignement français et francophonie dans les pays du nord de la Méditerranée pendant la IV^{e} République", *Relations Internationales*, 115, 2003, p. 359.

The Soviet allies of Eastern Europe gradually began to direct French cultural events to their liking, inviting only communists. Although the FCP wasn't part of the government in Paris and the administration sided right, French diplomacy didn't allow itself to express any negative notes or assessments, preferring to have cultural ambassadors rather than none. Thus, in May 1948, celebrations were organized throughout the region in connection with the 100th anniversary of the events in France (the establishment of the Paris Commune), the core suggestion being how the poor rose up against the rich.[42]

The artists who were members of the FCP didn't understand and didn't approve socialist realism[43], but remained loyal to the freedom of ideas and expression. A good example in this sense is the "progressive" poet Paul Eluard, who is considered the founder of surrealism in the field of poetry.[44] In April 1950 he visited Bulgaria and delivered a lecture on modern French literature at the University of Sofia, which allegedly contained not quite acceptable findings. The consul in Varna reported that for his next lecture there listeners who didn't know French were mobilized. French diplomacy reported a success of French cultural influence.[45]

The next wave of purges and trials in Eastern Europe with accusations of espionage saw the abolition of Western institutions. The French Institute in Poland was closed in January 1950, later (in April 1951) – in Czechoslovakia, only in Hungary the institution was spared, but strictly controlled by the authorities.[46] In Bulgaria, this step was put off and it looks like there was a deliberate delay in search for a compromise, so as not to attack the French institutions. At the beginning of 1950, a director of the Alliance Française was to be elected/re-elected and the application of the last one in charge, Alphonse Barthel, was proposed to the Bulgarian government. The authorities made it clear that he was unacceptable because of his "*reactionary*" views. The cultural attaché, Marcel Eymonen, on his part, suggested a more acceptable option – to elect a Bulgarian. The idea was that, if the authorities believed that they have established control over the activities of the Alliance Française, the association wouldn't be threatened in any way. In

[42] C. Horel, "La récupération des cultures nationales: le cas de la Hongrie", in J.-Fr. Sirinelli and G.-H. Soutou (dir.), *Culture et guerre froide*, Paris, 2008, p. 30.

[43] ДАМВнР, оп. 1ª п, а.е. 439, л. 4.

[44] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Éluard.

[45] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/16, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1949 – 1955, Bulgarie, vol. 47, p. 13–18.

[46] G.H. Mond, "Les relations franco-polonaises après 1945", *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, 16, 1985, n°3, p. 90 ; C. Hayat, "Les relations culturelles franco-tchécoslovaques", *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, 8, 1999: https://www.pantheonsorbonne.fr/autres-structures-de-recherche/ipr/les-revues/bulletin/tous-les-bulletins/bulletin-n-08-chantiers-1999/cecile-hayat-les-relations-culturelles-franco-tchecoslovaques/; S. Guillaume, "La relance de l'action culturelle française en Pologne aux lendemains de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale 1946–1956", in O. Chaline, J. Dumanowski, and M. Figeac (dir.). *Le rayonnement français en Europe Centrale. Du XVII^e siècle à nos jours*, Pessac, 2009, p. 519–529. https://books.openedition.org/msha/18037; C. Horel, "La France et la Hongrie : affinités passées et présentes, de saint Martin à Nicolas Sarkozy", *Revue historique des armées*, 270, 2013, p. 9.

February 1950 the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party approved the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Evgeni Kamenov for its chairman.[47] However, several months passed without a response.

One could suppose that an express Soviet order was received in Sofia that no exception was permissible, as a result of which in August 1950 the French Institute, the Alliance Française, the Information and Press Service of France in Bulgaria were all closed.[48] The behavior of the above-mentioned Evgeni Kamenov speaks for itself in support of this assumption. The acting Chargé d'affaires, René Chalon, visited him to protest against the violence of the police officers. Kamenov was embarrassed, apologized and "*invited me to come to him as often as I deemed necessary*".[49] The conciliatory attitude of the Bulgarian diplomat rises the doubt that this act (the closure) wasn't accepted willingly in Sofia, and there have been a concern that it would affect the bilateral Bulgarian-French political relations.

On the contrary, although still a communist hard-liner, Yugoslavia's Tito, after his split with Stalin, needed a Western economic aid and to this end eased his policy a little towards opening to the French cultural presence. In 1952, French Institutes were established in Belgrade, Zagreb, Split and Skopje, but language courses were forbidden. In 1961, an education reform was carried out, which made the study of English and Russian languages compulsory in Yugoslav schools, and the French language lost ground.[50] And learning a language is generally related to the transfer of ideas, civilization knowledge and ideological influence. Public preferences oriented towards American pop music and film productions.[51]

There were no restrictions in Turkey (except the lack of foreign language education in primary schools). French cultural diplomacy, however, operated in a medium of serious Western competition, especially American one. Paris constantly increased the number of scholarships, of French teachers and lecturers, of projected French movies, annually providing performances of a French theatrical troupe and concerts of classical musicians.[52] According to Paul Garde, however, the English language prevailed in Turkey as well.[53]

The situation in Greece was similar. In the post-war period Washington developed ambitious programs, more than 200 language centres were established. From the beginning of the 1950s, English became the official language for the Greek public administration. In 1951 French was made optional, while English remained compulsory. The US had a share in the Greek movie industry, which increased their opportunities for cultural influence. As Mathilde Cheze points out, the Greek audience became used to the *Hollywood light plots* and few people

[47] ЦДА, ф. 1б, оп. 8, а.е. 1134, л. 1.

[48] ДАМВнР, оп. 3п, а.е. 582, л. 6.

[49] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/16, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1949–1955, Bulgarie, vol. 47, p. 29–30.

[50] K. Todić, *A Traditional Friendship?*…, p. 133, 240, 276.

[51] Dr. Petrović, *Francusko-srpski odnosi 1800–2010*, Beograd, 2011, p. 302.

[52] *Documents diplomatiques français*. 1968, Vol. 34/ Tome II, 2 juillet – 31 décembre, Paris, 2010, p. 478–481.

[53] P. Garde, "Les Balkans vus de France au XXe siècle", *Esprit*, 270, 2000, p. 30.

attended the French cinema. Since the second half of the 1970s, Paris put efforts in expanding its cultural influence by increasing the number of scholarships, opening new branches of the French Institute in Athens, organizing lectures, exhibitions, concerts, etc. These activities, however, couldn't catch up with the popularity of the American programs.[54]

In Bulgaria, the first Francophonie event after the interruption of the cultural ties was the presentation of the French movie entitled "Without Leaving an Address", in the Bulgarian movie theatres in the fall of 1953. Its plot tackled a social theme that should show the dissolution of the capitalist society[55], and selections of the sort would continue even later. Still, however, they contained shots of cafes, well-stocked shops, and comfortable homes that questioned official propaganda.[56] The number of French exhibitions, theatrical plays and concerts increased. It seems that classical music and chansons were favored by the government[57] as a means of diverting the public interest from British and American rock songs with their unsightly performers[58]. Studying the Russian language was compulsory and Western languages were generally optional. For political reasons, however, predominantly French classes and teachers were tolerated.[59] Quai d'Orsay's reports emphasized the fact that for a long period of time studying of French in Bulgaria retained an enviable place among other Western languages.[60] Romania must have maintained the same policy as another French report underlined that "*So far Bulgaria, along with Romania, has been one of the Francophonie fortresses in Eastern Europe and on the Balkans*".[61]

[54] L. Plassmann, *Comme dans une nuit de Pâques ? Les relations franco-qrecques, 1944–1981*, Bruxelles, 2012, p. 86, 87–88, 126, 175, 387, 388 ; M. Cheze, *La France en Grèce*…, p. 258, 314, 348, 369, 374, 414, 422, 442 ; A. Dulphy, "Enseignement français…", p. 359 ; J.E. Miller, *The United States and the Making of Modern Greece: History and Power, 1950–1974*, University of North Carolina Press, 2009, p. 111.

[55] ЦДА, КМФ-12, инв. № 665/16, ADMAE, Série Z Europe 1949–1955, Bulgarie, vol. 47, p. 189–191.

[56] M.-P. Rey, "Le cinéma dans les relations franco-soviétiques", in J.-Fr. Sirinelli and G.-H. Soutou (dir.), *Culture et guerre froide*, Paris, 2008, p. 172.

[57] A response of the French Embassy in Bulgaria in a questionnaire, dating from the beginning of January 1968, indicated a lot of radio programmes with French classical and popular music (Dalida, Yves Montand etc.). Fiche du MAE, la Direction des services d'information et de presse, la Sous-direction de documentation, a.s. la Bulgarie, questions culturelles, le 3 janvier 1968. ADMAE, Série Europe 1961–1970, Sous-série Bulgarie, carton 178.

[58] Students and young men with long hair and tight pants were persecuted by the security services. Я. Янчева, „Възникване и характерни практики на рок културата в малкия град", in М. Златкова, Б. Петкова, С. Антонов (съст.), *След следващата запетая. 20 години етнология в Пловдивския университет*, Пловдив, 2015, с. 267.

[59] И. Григорова, "Френската културна политика в България (40-те – 80-те г. на XX в.)", *Дзяло*, 2017, № 10, 27 с. (http://www.abcdar.com/magazine/X/Grigorova_1314-9067_X.pdf)

[60] Note du MAE, la Direction Générale des affaires culturelles, scientifiques et techniques, a.s. les relations culturelles, scientifiques et techniques franco-bulgares, le 18 septembre 1974. ADMAE, Série Europe 1971–1976, sous-série Bulgarie, carton 3168.

[61] Note de Pol le Gourriérec, Ambassadeur de France en Bulgarie, à Son Excellence Monsieur Michel Jobert, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, a.s. la politique culturelle en Bulgarie, Sofia, le 16 novembre 1973. ADMAE, Série Europe 1971–1976, Sous-série Bulgarie, carton 3170.

The development in the first years following the end of the Second World War demonstrates the multifaceted strategy of the French cultural diplomacy, based on several centuries of tradition. Despite the financial difficulties, Paris strived to use all the available mechanisms for the spread of the French language and culture. A feature of this strategy was the selection of artists and works of art that would provoke a favorable response. Therefore, the French cultural events were in line with the pro-Soviet or pro-Western orientation of the Balkan countries. But, as the brief summary of the events from the 1950s onwards shows, the final success depended on the national regulatory mechanisms of the recipients.