This book by Milan Ristović, professor ordinarius and head of the Department of Contemporary History at the Faculty of Arts of the Belgrade University, is on the one hand, a valuable contribution to the study of the manifold and poorly researched Yugoslav-Turkish relations, and on the other, a testimony to all the hindrances standing in the way of such research. At the same time, it is a contribution to the knowledge of the relations of the exiled Yugoslav government with neutral countries in the Second World War – a subject about which there is not exactly abundant information. Because of its neutrality during World War II, Turkey, and particularly her capital Ankara and the largest city of Istanbul, were important in many ways – not just for the Yugoslav government – as a place for gathering information and establishing formal, and more importantly, informal diplomatic contacts and as a stage for the diplomatic and intelligence contest between the belligerent blocks of powers. All this is reflected in Ristović’s book, although the main topics (very conditionally speaking) are the activities of the Yugoslav embassy and the Turkish policy towards the Yugoslav diplomatic mission, and even more towards other belligerent parties from whose pressures and allurements Turkey strove to preserve its neutrality.

In the Forward (pp. 7–15) the author expounds the importance of the topic and comments on the archival sources and historiographical literature he has used in his work. He points out that the documents have been only partly preserved. The bibliography of works dealing with the Yugoslav government’s diplomatic activities during World War II is also not very large. All this caused the narration to be only partly chronological, i.e. it required a more problem-oriented approach. The availability of archival sources prevented this book from becoming a comprehensive study of Yugoslav-Turkish relations in the Second World War in their Balkan context.

The Introduction (pp. 17–26) depicts the international situation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Turkey and their bilateral relations during the 1920s and 1930s. The main junctures defining the position of the two countries in the region and in mutual relations were the Balkan Pact (1934), the Treaty of Friendship, Non-Aggression, Legal Processes, Arbitration and Settlement (November 1933), as well as Turkey’s agreement with Great Britain and France concluded in spring 1939.
The first chapter (pp. 26–44) deals with the Yugoslav-Turkish relations 1939–1941 in the context of British attempts at creating a common Balkan front that would be dragged into war on the side of the United Kingdom. Ristović follows the filigree of the diplomatic game between European capitals and Balkan governments on the eve and after the beginning of World War II from which the United Kingdom eventually came out a loser.

The next chapter (pp. 45–60) deals with Turkish endeavours to preserve her neutrality during 1941/42. Part of these endeavours was the “freezing” of the alliance with Greece and Yugoslavia which had fallen victims to German-Italian aggression. Turkey was relieved for a while after the German attack on the USSR that reduced its fears concerning an attack from the north. However, this satisfaction was soon marred by renewed German diplomatic pressure and “friendly” advances by German satellites Bulgaria and Romania. Turkey had to cope with them too, without shutting the door on the Western Allies.

Chapter Three (pp. 61–70) deals with Turkish relations with the Yugoslav government in exile. Having lost the national territory, the Yugoslav government was by far the weaker partner, so in order to preserve formal diplomatic relations with Ankara it had to put up with some Turkish opinions and attitudes that would otherwise have been totally unacceptable. Despite this, the Yugoslav government was keen to preserve diplomatic relations, because in an indirect way this meant that Turkey did not recognize the liquidation of the Yugoslav state and that it could serve as source of information from the Balkans. The general Turkish desire to see the independence of Balkan states restored was favourable for Yugoslavia.

The fourth chapter (pp. 71–80) deals with Turkey’s place within the framework of the plans and praxis of the German “New Order”. The next two chapters (pp. 81–111) deal with information gathering – public and espionage through Yugoslav diplomatic missions. The latter chapter is devoted to the Yugoslav intelligence activities. Ristović comes to the conclusion that they had been rent by personal and party feuds and rivalries that made them completely ineffectual. Furthermore, some agents of the Yugoslav secret service were suspected of working for the Third Reich or Great Britain.

Chapter Seven (pp. 112–134) deals with the attempts of the government of the Independent State of Croatia (that comprised Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and that had been set up by the Germans in April 1941 after the dismemberment of Yugoslavia) to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey between 1941 and 1943. Such relations were attempted through the Turkish embassy in Sofia and through several delegations of Bosnian Muslims, for whom the Ustasha government in Zagreb hoped they would be able to