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**THE NEW EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC DURING THE PERIOD OF STALINISM.
A FOREIGN DIPLOMAT'S VIEW**

Abstract: This study, based on two diplomatic briefings from the late 1940s, aims to highlight the perception of a foreign diplomat with regard to the sudden changes that took place in Romanian society during the early years of Romanian communism. Since all the sectors of public activity were affected by the communist regime, education and science also had to suffer because of it. The Romanian Academy was disbanded and university professors were purged and sentenced to prison. The Italian diplomat deplored the fate of education in Romania, which was a mere shadow of education during the inter-war period. Intense training and qualification courses were organized for people who were utterly unequipped intellectually for academic study and research. They were subjected to constant and rigorous ideological control and then placed in positions of professors and instructors of the younger generations in the communist spirit. The seriousness of this process affected not only humanist education, but also on the technical one, which can explain why over the following decades, Romania experienced a technological gap.

Keywords: Romania, Italian diplomacy, school and education, communism, Stalinism

The regime established in Romania after the abdication of King Michael I on December 30, 1947, as a result of the new coordinates that defined the system of international relations after World War II, propelled the country definitively into an orbit that revolved around the Soviet Union, with all the repercussions that brutal Stalinism was to have for the political environment in Romania, as well as for the cultural and scientific life here. 1948 marked thus, for the Romanian state, as well as for all the countries that had been occupied by the Soviets during the military operations of 1944-45, a crucial moment in the establishment of the Stalinist regime. As is well known, some states such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria were gradually imposed a regime of “popular democracy.” In 1948 the Soviets were concerned to speed up “the revolutionary process” that was to start “building the socialist society” in the countries from their sphere of influence. That year marked the consolidation of the regime in Albania, which aligned itself to the Soviet position and condemned the Yugoslav defection. It was not by chance that Romania, which in 1947 was the last monarchy that had survived in the Eastern Bloc, was subjected, after the abdication of the king and the establishment of the Romanian People’s Republic, to a “revolutionary process” of implementing the Soviet model in all spheres of public life. The new republican constitution of 13 April 1948 automatically outlawed any association of a “fascist or anti-democratic nature” and

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sanctioned the notion that in the public life of Romania, only “those who work” were entitled to the freedoms of expression and association. The fact that the working class was privileged in the new society had *in primis* the role of strengthening the regime, which aimed to place, in key management positions, individuals who were open to the new ideologies and to remove the old staff – who were reluctant to embrace Marxism-Leninism and who, by virtue of their cultural matrix of origin, were adverse to the principles of societal governance imported from Moscow. Their place was to be taken by the new people, trained in the spirit of Stalinist precepts. To that end, the new ideological moulding of society, both during the period immediately succeeding the establishment of the people’s democracy, and over the next decades, was to rely substantially on education, which was to suffer the most acute consequences of deliberate indoctrination. From the very beginning, the regime was strongly interested in the formation of new acolytes, even though, for a while, it had to make use of the existing specialists, some of whom, albeit not too many (since this was the interwar elite that the new government was committed to annihilating), were favourable to the new changes.

Thus, in 1948, besides a series of measures designed to implement, mainly at an economic level, the people’s democracy and to definitively subordinate Romania to the regime in Moscow (after some measures in favour of the Soviets – for instance, on 4 February 1948, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Romanian People’s Republic was signed, providing for a common front against both Germany and any other powers that might be associated with it, and against the powers from the “camp of imperialism,” and on 23 May the same year, the last territory, Snake Island, was ceded in favour of the Soviets –, Romania took the first steps towards the collectivization of agriculture, the most important private businesses in the country were nationalized on 11 June 1948,² and at a cultural and religious level, on 17 July of that year the Concordat with the Holy see was denounced, subsequently, during the same year, the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church being dismantled, after the Stalinist model, and the forced union of the Greek-Catholics with the Romanian Orthodox Church was proclaimed), measures were taken for the reorganization of the secondary and higher education system, in the context of the need for a speedy training of personnel intended to support the new regime of popular democracy.

Thus, in preparation for the new academic year 1948-49, the Presidium of the Great National Assembly [M.A.N.] issued, on 2 August 1948, Decree no. 175/1948 for education reform, published in *The Official Gazette* [*Monitorul oficial*] of 3 August 1948.³ The provisions of this decree sanctioned the new political and

² Law no. 119 of 11 June 1948 for the nationalization of industrial, banking, insurance, mining and transport businesses, *The Official Gazette*, no. 133 bis, 11 June 1948.

³ *The Official Gazette*, CXVI, no. 177 of 3 August 1948, pp. 6321-6324. See also Dănuț Doboș, “Reforma învățământului. Decretul 175/1948,” *Arhivele totalitarismului*, București, III, no. 3, 1995, pp. 200-209; Dinu C. Giurescu, *Învățământul în România între anii 1948 și 1989*. Dissertation delivered during the ceremony for granting the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Craiova, 22 November 2001, 27 p. www.ucv.ro/pdf/international/informatii_generale/doctor_honoris/68.pdf.

ideological orientation of the government, and clearly pointed out the need for the training of new personnel with secondary and higher education qualifications on whom the regime could rely.⁴ The measure for the reorganization of education, at the

⁴ Article I of the decree stated that public education was to be organized exclusively by the state, on “democratic, popular, realistic and scientific bases,” a secular education by definition; article II showed clearly that public education aimed to “train specialists with secondary and higher education, on a scientific basis, so that they could correspond to the needs of consolidating popular democracy and building the socialist society;” article XXXI of Chapter V, *Final and Transitional Provisions*, stipulated the existence of new structures of education which should serve the objective of a speedy training of professionals (“For the urgent needs of the economic and social life of the country, schools with a shorter duration than that provided for in this law can be set up, under circumstances that will be laid down by special laws”), and through a series of articles (XXXV-XXXVII), a strong blow was dealt to private and denominational education, since the decision was that “all denominational or private schools, of any kind” should become state schools, their teaching staff being employed in the public education system, “according to the degrees they possess and in accordance with the provisions of the laws in force at the date of the promulgation of this law”; moreover, any attempt to set back the process of transforming private and denominational schools into state schools was to be punished with 5-10 years of hard labor and the confiscation of the entire wealth (under Decree no. 176, published in *The Official Gazette* of 3 August 1948, pp. 6324-6325, there were passed into state property all movables and immovable that had belonged to the churches, congregations, communities or individuals and had been used for the functioning and maintenance of private, secular or confessional educational institutions). Also, article XXXIII went against the principles of university autonomy, stating that “the current faculties and schools of higher education will be restructured,” the law providing the grounds for the dismantling of “unnecessary departments,” for the rationalization of some departments, as needed, and for the establishment of new departments. As regards university autonomy, it should be noted that a number of provisions from 1946-47 cancelled it permanently (see, above all, Decree. 658 of 24 August 1946). In fact, by Law no. 866 of 30 October 1946, the Ministry of National Education amended the law on the organization of higher education, appointments to and revocations from university managerial positions being made, until 31 March 1947, by the ministry. Regarding the policy of interference in the traditional organization of the university system, we should also mention Law no. 55 of 2 March 1948, which amended the law governing higher education through a single article that empowered the minister of education to decide the application, from the beginning, of whatever employment procedures he saw fit for the vacant professorships. Also, on 6 November 1948, the Decree of M.A.N. no. 312/1948 was issued for the regulation of some transitional rules regarding the operation of institutes of higher education, on the basis of the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 1483/1948 (see *The Official Gazette* of 9 November 1948). The decree stipulated that the Ministry of Public Education was authorized, for the academic year 1948-49, to appoint, in the institutions of higher education, substitute professors and auxiliary personnel, choosing “people with specialist scientific reputation from outside the teaching staff in the higher education system,” to “delegate into the functions of rector and dean from the same institution also the members of the teaching staff” appointed as provided above and to include all the faculties in the established structure, with the necessary teaching staff, “employing, if necessary, the existing teaching staff from one faculty to another.” The provisions regarding the universities and institutions of higher education in the country offered the legal framework, on the one hand, for the changing the curricula in accordance with the Soviet model – in fact, the entire organizational structure of the education presented in the law reproduced, to the point of reproducing the names of the institutions, in translation, the educational structure at work in the U.S.S.R., taking over the paradigm of the cultural revolution, which was aimed at the complete eradication of illiteracy. The new system was mainly focused on the education of all the children of school age and was less concerned with the issue of the duration of studies. Free and compulsory primary education of 7 years was reduced to only 4 years, with the possibility of optionally attending grades 5-7. Secondary and high-school education of 8 years was demoted to a middle school education

beginning of August 1948, was preceded by a series of other decrees and directives intended to “reshape” Romanian science and culture after the example of Moscow. It should not be forgotten that on 9 February 1948, *The Official Gazette* published Lists 49 and 50 of banned publications, which the Commission for the Guidance of Cultural Events at the Ministry of Intelligence had decided to withdraw from circulation.⁵ Decree no. 76 of 9 June 1948⁶ abolished the Romanian Academy – the nation’s supreme forum of scientific decision, recognition, and legitimation – the aim being that of its reorganization in the form of a state institution, the Academy of the Romanian People’s Republic. The decree stipulated that the purpose of the new state institution – which was directly subordinated to the Council of Ministers and was financed from the state budget, would lose its autonomy and be stripped of all the movable and immovable properties received as donations or testamentary bequests⁷ – was the promotion of science and culture in all areas “in order to raise the material and cultural level of the people” (in other words, this institution was envisaged as the highest expression of science and culture in a regime of popular democracy), as well

with a duration of 4 years (see the preliminaries for this reorganization in Law no. 216 of 28 March 1946, for the establishment of unique secondary schools, applied with effect from 1 September the previous year, which laid down courses of three years and abolished the secondary schools of 4 years annexed to high schools). On the other hand, the intention was to purge the teaching staff who no longer corresponded to the principles of the regime and who were considered harmful from the perspective of the influence they could have on pupils and students. We should mention, moreover, that by Order no. 416741 of 31 December 1946, the Ministry of National Education established County Committees for ascertaining the effective fulfilment of their duties by the members of the teaching staff from secondary schools in all the categories that depended on this ministry. Also, it should be noted that at the beginning of the academic year 1949-1950 alone, no less than 181 professors were removed from the structures of higher education, in accordance with a report of the Ministry of Education from 1950s. Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu, Ovidiu Bozgan, *O istorie a Universității din București (1864-2004)*, Ed. Universității din București, 2004, p. 279; Loredana Tănăsie, “Anul 1948 și învățământul românesc,” *Memorial 1989. Buletin Științific și de Informare al Asociației Memorialul Revoluției 16-22 December 1989*, Timișoara, Centrul Național de Documentare, Cercetare și Informare despre Revoluția din December 1989, 2014, no. 2 (14), pp. 108-119.

⁵ *The Official Gazette*, part I, no. 32, 9 February 1948, p. 1056.

⁶ Published in *The Official Gazette*, part I, CXVI, no. 132 bis of 9 June 1948, p. 5017.

⁷ The number of sections of the Academy of R.P.R. was, however, increased from three to six, receiving in its suborder a number of research institutes that had been, until then, dependent on the universities of the country. It also benefited from two subsidiaries, in Iasi and Cluj, for a more effective control of scientific activity. See the Statute of the Organization and Functioning of the Academy R.P.R., approved on 12 August 1948 and published in *The Official Gazette* of 13 August 1948, together with Decrees no. 1454 and 1455 of the Presidium of the M.A.N. from 12 August, which altered the leadership and the composition of the Academy, a situation that went against the customs of this institution, since the choice of the leadership and the composition of the highest scientific body of the country was the competence of the General Assembly of the Academy. Decree no. 1454 appointed 27 active full members, 15 honorary members, 11 honorary foreign members, while Decree no. 1455 appointed the leadership of the Academy of R.P.R. Under the Decision of the Council of Ministers published in *The Official Gazette* on 2 November 1948, all movable and immovable goods, given or testate over time, were passed into the heritage of the relevant ministries, “with the exception of goods which directly serve the goals of the Academy.” For an overview of this issue, see Dan Berindei, *Istoria Academiei Române (1866-2016)*, second revised edition, București, Ed. Academiei Române, 2016, pp. 312-322.

as the promotion of men of science and culture “of ethical and democratic merit” (Article 2), with the mention that “individuals who, through their work, had placed themselves in the service of fascism and reactionarism, harming, thus, the interests of the country and of the people, could not be members of the Academy of the Romanian People’s Republic” (Article 3). After the transformation of the Romanian Academy into an institution of the regime, the members of the Academy of R.P.R. no longer included 113 former members of the old Romanian Academy (26 full members, 58 correspondent members and 29 honorary members), representing over a third of the previous academic body. 31 of the former members were sentenced to prison, where 9 of them lost their lives.⁸ Accordingly, on 15 July 1948, by the decree of M.A.N., in the context of the reorganization of research institutions, there were abolished: the Institutes of National History in Cluj and Iași, the Institute for the Study of World History, the Institute of Byzantine Studies, the Institute of Balkan Studies and Research (with their prestigious reviews, *Revista istorică*, *Revista istorică română*, *Balcania*, *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*). Instead, the foundations were laid for the History Institute of the R.P.R. (with four departments – national history, world history, the history of the Slavic and Balkan peoples, Byzantinology – and two subsidiaries, in Cluj and Iași), its publication being the review *Studies*.⁹ In accordance with a decree issued on 28 January 1949 by the M.A.N., the members of the new institute enjoyed a series of economic facilities and salary raises.

At the level of the educational system, the content of the materials that were taught in school was reorganized. The goal was the formation of a new man, with a Marxist-Leninist type of thinking, who would willingly support the regime. To that end, the textbooks that might contain information contrary to the new ideology had to be eliminated, including those written by authors considered enemies of the ideocratic regime. By Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 61363 of 1945, the textbooks of the authors excluded by the Review Commission were removed from schools, even though they had been approved by the leadership of the ministry. The education law of August 1948 provided that school textbooks would be “unique,” and the school curriculum “will develop substantially the fundamental disciplines: language, literature, national history and geography, mathematics, natural sciences, and physical education,” with the specification that the Russian language would be a compulsory subject in the fourth elementary grade.¹⁰ In fact, for training the necessary staff, Law no. 327 of 1947 established the Institute of Romanian-Soviet Studies, which organized superior courses of Russian that lasted three years, offering specialized degrees in the Russian language that were the equivalent of university degrees.¹¹ The consequence of the education law of August 1948 was the

⁸ Păun Ion Otiman, 1948 – *Anul imensei jertfe a Academiei Române*, “Akademos,” no. 4 (13), December 2013, p. 118.

⁹ L. Tănăsie, *op. cit.*, p. 116; Decree no. 148 for the organisation of the History Institute of the R.P.R. in *The Official Gazette*, part I, CXVI, no. 161 of 15 July 1948.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 110; D. C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 10.

¹¹ Through a ministerial decision of 7 June 1948, the Ministry of Education stipulated that the training of the teachers of Russian language and culture should be provided by the above-mentioned institute.

replacement of some materials with Stalinist propaganda and the ban on the teaching of religion. The Russian language and Marxism-Leninism became compulsory subjects. Moreover, the grammar, history and philosophy textbooks were rewritten in accordance with the rules of Marxist-Leninist thought.¹² Most often these were translated from Russian.¹³

The politicization of the Romanian education system meant that already in 1946 party education began to be implemented and developed. The newly established institutions included the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School, the Central Party School in the Hungarian Language, the “A. A. Zhdanov” Central School for Lecturers, 13 evening schools of Marxism-Leninism, 17 party schools with six-month courses, 42 party schools with 3 month-courses and numerous circles for the study of the Communist Party and the biography of Stalin, as part of the evening party classes organized in various towns and villages.

Among the complementary measures that prepared the ground for the new education law and completed the deliberate orientation of the education system towards a well-defined ideological goal was Decree no. 159, published in *The Official Gazette* of 2 August 1948, which abolished all foreign schools on the territory of R.P.R., supplemented by provisions allowing the students of the aforementioned educational institutions to enrol in state schools. The teachers who were Romanian citizens working in those schools had the option to be employed in state education.¹⁴ In addition, a ministerial decision of 19 June 1948 stipulated the termination, as of 1 October 1948, in other words, at the beginning of the new academic year, of “all employment contracts of the teaching and research staff in higher and secondary education” (Article 1). The due remuneration was to be paid to them up until 30 September 1948, despite the fact that the above-mentioned teaching staff ceased to be employed in the education system at the end of the 1947-48 academic year. The ministerial decision provided that the ministry would create, with effect from 1 October 1948, “new employment contracts for the teaching and scientific needs of education.”¹⁵ The provision was obviously intended to remove undesirable teachers

See Decision no. 150350 of the Ministry of Education in *The Official Gazette*, CXVI, part I, no. 135, 14 June 1948; D. C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹² L. Tănăsie, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

¹³ For example, in a debate of the Political Bureau of the Romanian Worker's Party from February 7, 1949, the then minister of Education, Gheorghe Vasilichi showed that for the pedagogical schools “a very good textbook has just been released in the Soviet Union, a textbook that we will translate and use,” while for the secondary schools, Gheorghe Stoica appreciated that “we have largely succeeded in removing unnecessary subject matters and replacing them with the subject corresponding to these new times,” in particular, dialectical materialism and political economy, all this signifying “a great step forward.” D. C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁴ *The Official Gazette*, CXVI, no. 176, 2 August 1948, p. 6301; Idem, no. 168, 23 July 1948, p. 6044; L. Tănăsie, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115. It should be noted that the measure was adopted in line with a policy targeted at the surveillance and control of foreigners in Romania (under Law no. 411, published in *The Official Gazette* no. 128 of 5 June 1946, the Ministry of the Interior was empowered to organize and carry out the census of aliens in Romania).

¹⁵ Decision no. 162067 published in *The Official Gazette*, CXVI, no. 142, 23 June 1948, p. 5289; D. C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

permanently from education and it seems that their number was large enough to cause, at the beginning of 1949, the discontent of the Minister of Public Education, Gheorghe Vasilichi (who found, on 7 February 1949, that “too many old professors remained unemployed on grounds that were not serious enough”), especially since the new teachers were not sufficiently well trained (other, “less capable individuals” – the then Minister of Education showed – “were made professors without any merit”).¹⁶

The 1949-50 academic year saw further purges in the Ministry of National Education.¹⁷ These started in the fall of 1944 through the removal of professors considered collaborators of the Antonescu regime,¹⁸ and continued with a second wave in the autumn of 1947 (when, on 4 October, 229 full and associate professorships, with over 500 teaching positions in the higher education system, were suppressed, under the false grounds of budgetary economy and *ex officio* retirement, under the circumstances in which university autonomy had been dismantled by

¹⁶ D. C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 9; L. Tănăsie, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

¹⁷ Numerous decisions of purging the staff of the Ministry of National Education were taken on the basis of Law no. 217 of 30 March 1945 on the purification of public administration.

¹⁸ At the end of World War II, the problem of sanctioning war crimes emerged in international legal practice. Whereas in the summer of 1945 the four victorious powers divided their tasks in this area, the Soviet Union was entrusted, obviously, with the task of punishing the crimes committed by the Nazi authorities in Eastern Europe. Article 14 of the Armistice Convention signed by Romania on September 12, 1944 provided for the obligation of the Romanian government and the Romanian High Command to cooperate with the Allied High Command to the arrest persons accused of war crimes and send them to trial. In the autumn of 1944 and in early 1945 a series of laws that were issued in Romania were designed to adapt domestic legislation to the new international legal practice and to carry out the commitment made under the Armistice Convention. Analysed in detail, these laws operated with approximate categories and questionable procedures, allowing the interference of political factors, arrests and unjust convictions. In parallel, in the press of the time, a veritable campaign was triggered for removing, from public life, the men of culture who were considered to be collaborators the Antonescu regime, criminals, untrustworthy citizens, morally and professionally, who would prove harmful for the new society. This media campaign was delivered by several opportunistic intellectuals, who were trying either to keep up with the new political developments in order not to be made to suffer, or to lay the foundations for a future political career. Through suggestively entitled editorials (e.g., “Figures of traitors” – *România Liberă*), newspapers such as *Scântea*, *România Liberă*, *Victoria*, run by N. D. Cocea, or *Tribuna Poporului*, under the leadership of G. Călinescu, published “compromising” articles about a series of intellectuals, insistently demanding that they should be their removed from public life. The purpose was that of denigrating the personalities in question in the eyes of the public, and of justifying the unfair measures that were to be taken. Thus, on December 12, 1944, an article published in *Scântea*, entitled “Purgings at the Ministry of Education,” informed that it had been decided, following the resolution of the Purging Commission of the University of Bucharest, to oust 9 associate professors and professors from the education system. By decree no. 152 of 24 November 1945, issued by the Ministry of National Education, signed by Minister Ștefan Voitec and countersigned by King Mihai I, invoking the findings of December 2, 1944 of the Commission for the review of the members of the teaching staff of the University of Bucharest, established by laws no. 486 and 594 of 1944, 11 associate professors and professors were removed from their positions, with the mention that they would cease to be part of the university teaching staff on the date of publication of the decree. D. C. Giurescu, *Guvernarea Nicolae Rădescu*, București, Ed. All, 1996, pp. 82-90; *Epurăția la Ministerul Educației*, “*Scântea*,” a. I, no. 82, 12 December 1944, p. 3; *The Official Gazette*, part I, no. 20, 26 January 1945, p. 494.

Decree no. 658 of 24 August 1946),¹⁹ being supplemented by the ministerial decision of 19 June 1948. The purging policy went hand in hand with the policy of creating, through forced measures that altered the quality of education, teaching staff that would be loyal to the regime. One of the first decisions was that reached by the Ministry of National Education on 14 November 1944. It stipulated the revision of the unlawful acts and of the persecution ones issued after disciplinary trials, in particular against the “democratic” teachers, with a view to repairing the injustices committed with regard to the employment and advancement of certain individuals in the education system.

The depreciation of the Romanian education system and the process of acute politicization and ideologization are approached in the two documents presented in the annex to this study. The documents are preserved in Rome, at Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri. They reflect the perception of a foreign diplomat, the Minister of Italy in Bucharest at that time, Michele Scammacca.²⁰ On 1 November 1949, Baron Scammacca sent the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs a “telespresso” regarding the situation of the teaching staff in Romania after the beginning of the new academic year. Referring in the opening to the policy of “eliminating the elements deemed to be utterly opposed or dangerous to the regime” (doc. 1 of the annex) and to the employment of new teaching staff in the vacancies from the 1948-49 academic year, the Italian diplomat drew an alarm signal concerning the policy of coercion and indoctrination of the Romanian teaching staff who were still employed at the end of the 1948-49 academic year, and who were obliged to attend summer orientation courses for professors, under the imminent threat of losing their jobs. These one-month courses, organized in the most important cities of the country, were received by the teaching staff from Romania, as Minister Scammacca showed, “with obvious dissatisfaction, both because of the coercive, disciplinary regime in which the courses were organized, and because of the subjects they had to learn, as if they were elementary grade students, neither the cultural background, nor the didactic training of each of them being taken into account.” In fact, the low scientific standing offered by those courses was stressed repeatedly by Baron Scammacca, who stated that all the communist authorities were interested in at

¹⁹ Maria Someșan, Mircea Iosifescu, “Modificarea structurii universității în anii consolidării sistemului comunist,” *Analele Sighet. Anul 1948 – instituționalizarea comunismului*, București, Fundația Academia Civică, 1998, pp. 445-480; D. C. Giurescu, *Învățământul în România între anii 1948 și 1989*, p. 14. In fact, the Ministry of National Education published 4700 primary school vacancies in *The Official Gazette* no. 50 of 1 March 1947. This was the result not only of the deliberate policy of literacy dissemination among all children of school age, but also of the frequent dismissals of teachers.

²⁰ Baron Michele Scammacca del Murgo e di Agnone, Minister of Italy to Bucharest (17 December 1947 – 14 March 1951), was, in 1953, the head of the diplomatic corps of the Italian Republic. During World War II, in 1942, he was the liaison between Italian Foreign Affairs and the High Command of the Italian Forces in Rome. He also served as ambassador to Brussels (1954-58). Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, *Inventario dell'archivio storico 1934-1970*, a cura di Maria M. Benzoni, Anna Ostinelli, Silvia M. Pizzetti, dir. scient. Brunello Vigezzi, Roma, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Direzione Generale per gli Archivi, Union Printing SpA, 2007, p. 539 (Strumenti, CLXXVII); Jonathan Steinberg, *All or Nothing. The Axis and the Holocaust, 1941-43*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

that time was implementing the notions of Marxism-Leninism among the professors. The courses were delivered, in almost all cases – the Italian diplomat showed – by lecturers with a meagre intellectual and professional capacity, “who were nonetheless deemed to be specialists in the doctrines of Marxism, which of course formed the basis of the teachings they imparted.” Further, Italy’s Minister to Bucharest recounted to the Foreign Ministry in Rome certain details regarding the organization of those summer courses, highlighting the tiresome schedule to which the members of the teaching staff were subjected. The professors and the teachers had to be present, for 30 days in a row, from 7 o’clock in the morning until 8 in the evening in the building where classes were held, with one break at noon, when they were forced to have lunch on the premises where the courses were delivered. Scammacca described the indoctrination to which they were exposed (endless lessons and conferences on historical and dialectical materialism, readings of and commentaries on the editorials printed in the official newspaper *Scântea*, meetings dedicated to illustrating the communist texts and quizzing the teachers on what they had learned, the questions being asked, as a rule, from among the topics approached in the lessons on a daily basis). In addition, Scammacca indicated to the Italian Foreign Ministry details regarding the police state regime in which the aforementioned courses were held in the summer of 1949, the severity and rigidity of the authorities that organized them, and their effects on the Romanian education system. Thus, the foreign diplomat showed, what negatively affected the atmosphere in which the lessons were conducted and made it oppressive “was the permanent presence, felt and experienced by everyone, of certain individuals who, having mingled with the professors, recorded their reactions and comments and reported on them.”²¹ In addition, the organizers evinced an obvious lack of flexibility as regards the participants’ schedule and their leisure time during the summer. Two absences were enough to expel someone from the course, which was tantamount to that person’s dismissal from his workplace. The severity of the organizers was also felt during the exams the participants had to take at the end of the cycle of lessons. These were rigorous written and oral examinations, and those who failed to pass them were automatically included on the lists of personnel to be purged.

²¹ By 1949 the regime of police control over public activity had become a reality that was difficult to circumvent in Romania. Throughout 1948, a series of legislative measures had been taken for the strengthening of the repressive system, with the purpose of consolidating the new regime. For example, under Law no. 53 of 2 March 1948, stipulating the establishment of safety measures in the border area, the Ministry of the Interior decided the removal of persons considered to be “hostile” from the frontier territory. On 13 May 1948, the same ministry issued operation order no. 5 for the arrest of the legionaries, an order that was put into practice during the night of 14-15 May. On August 28, 1948, under Decree no. 221 (*The Official Gazette* no. 200, 30 August 1948) the General Directorate of State Security was founded and organized. Its volume of expenditure was regulated in the section “higher interests of state.” Later, under Decree no. 436 of 3 December 1949, the Financial Guard was moved from the Ministry of Finance to that of the Interior. For “the renewal of the personnel” at the Ministry of the Interior, Decree no. 361 of 6 December 1948 decided the creation of special schools for administrative training, with a duration of 4-8 months, the above mentioned personnel policy being promoted at all levels of the administration.

While the end of the courses – the envoy of Italy to Bucharest showed – “was received with a breath of relief by all the professors,” the consequences were rather harsh for the body of teaching staff in Romania. On the basis of the results obtained, the teaching and the political authorities proceeded, in the autumn of 1949, to numerous dismissals of the highly qualified teaching staff of schools. That led to the problem of understaffing, which the authorities of the regime decided to solve by filling the vacancies with “entirely new elements, recruited through exceptional measures and on the basis of a prevalently political assessment.” Consequently, Michele Scammacca stated, “in the last few days, a ministerial decision has been put into practice for the first time [in Romania]. According to this, not only people with a degree, but also those who have passed their university exams can be appointed in state education without being subject to any contest, and even high school graduates that have worked for two years as substitute teachers can be employed as full-time teachers, on the basis of an easy qualification exam.” This practice, sanctioned by a ministerial decision that conflicted with the principles of a qualitatively validated education system, favouring, instead, the quantitative and ideological aspects, left the appointments of teachers at the discretion of the communist authorities, without taking into account the degree obtained upon graduation from a higher education institution. In elementary education, the process was faster, because already under Law no. 148 of 9 March 1946, even teachers who did not meet the conditions for becoming full-time schoolmasters (those with a provisional title and those with full qualifications who had taught for a mere three years) were given full tenure.

The phenomenon had become generalized as early as 1949 in the Romanian education system. For example, under the Journal of the Council of Ministers no. 169, published in *The Official Gazette* no. 47 of 26 February 1948, a people's school of law had been established next to the tribunal. The duration of the courses was three months, the purpose being obviously that of urgently training new clerks who would support the regime, even though their level of specialization left a lot to be desired, primarily because of the minimal time allotted to it. Those schools had not been opened by chance, because under Law no. 64 of 11 March 1948, the Ministry of Justice had been empowered to transform, by 30 March 1948, the structure of court officials, without needing the approval of any committee, without any well-founded motivation and without the measures being of a disciplinary nature. In this context, there were numerous layoffs and the regime urgently needed numerous cohorts of loyal officials who could be appointed to the vacated posts. In addition, Decree no. 297/1948 established schools of law with a duration of one year in the university centres of Bucharest, Iași and Cluj.

These forced specializations, which had as a result “the introduction of poorly trained teaching staff, both from a cultural and from a professional point of view,” were seen in the foreign diplomatic milieu from the R.P.R. as the cause of the accelerated downfall of the Romanian higher education system, which “had already declined markedly in recent years,” Baron Scammacca claimed, “both because of the new curricula and due to the exclusion from the schools of many of the best teachers, whose only guilt was that they belonged to the class of the bourgeoisie; in their stead,

there are brought and are preferred, in any case, the sons of workers and peasants, solely on the grounds of their origin, with no regard for their greater or lesser propensity for studying.”

In another briefing submitted by Minister Scammacca, on 6 December 1949, to the Italian Foreign Ministry, the authorities in Rome were made aware of the latest developments of technical education in Romania, a branch of the education system that was privileged by the new regime of popular democracy and that underwent a process of accelerating the pace of specialization, by virtue of the same personnel policy promoted by the government (doc. 2 in the annex). Baron Scammacca referred first to the provisions of Decree no. 175/1948 for education reform, which allowed the most industrious workers in the factories, who had completed a two-year secondary education training course, to enrol in Universities in order to obtain a higher education degree.²² Beyond the biased provisions of the education law of August 1948, the Italian minister in Bucharest informed Rome that, probably out of a desire to further accelerate the pace of training technical and management proletarian personnel – while the members of the bourgeois class were swiftly barred from any lucrative activity – the Polytechnics in Bucharest, Iași and Timisoara and the Faculties of Mechanical Engineering from Cluj and Brașov began to organize, in the summer of 1949, starting on 16 August, accelerated courses with a duration of 45 days for workers who aspired to become admitted in the aforementioned institutes of higher education. At the end of those courses, which were concluded with an exam, hundreds of young workers, who had no more than an elementary school graduation

²² It should be noted that the above-mentioned decree sanctioned the “modulation” of the education system according to the needs of the new society and not necessarily based on a qualitative standard (Article XVIII provided that “Institutes of higher education are meant to create, in the first place, senior specialists intended for the production: engineers, agronomists [...] and teachers for the secondary education system,” articles XII and XIV provided for the organization of technical schools with a duration of four years, in order to “train the technical personnel with secondary education necessary for the production,” and of vocational schools annexed to factories, for the “training of skilled personnel,” pointing out that a new law would regulate their organization and functioning, while Article XXXI provided for the establishment of schools with a shorter duration than that provided by this law, under conditions that were to be set by special laws, so as to cater “for the urgent economic and social needs of the country,” and Article XXVI, decided the creation of special schools of 2 years, “in some centres, for the working people”). Article XXVI relating to special schools for the working class further stipulated that “these schools aim to give students a training that is the equivalent of secondary education,” establishing that “those who pass the entrance exam can become students of these schools,” so there were no other requirements regarding their prior qualifications. Also, the students of these schools were to be removed from the production process, and their expenses were to be covered, throughout the duration of their academic studies, by the relevant ministries and enterprises. After graduating from these schools, the former students were entitled to take the entrance examination for higher education. Consequently, high school graduation and the baccalaureate were no longer mandatory requirements for enrolling in a university. Moreover, under Decision no. 263335 of 16 October 1948, there were set up, for the working people, special two-year schools, equivalent to middle schools, to give them the possibility of pursuing higher studies. We can say very little, from a historical perspective, about the number of such schools that were in operation, about the workers who followed those courses, and the teachers who taught them, about the subjects included in the curricula and their level, or about the amount of wages paid to working people who specialized themselves in these special schools.

certificate, were able to access, that autumn, based solely on the above-mentioned exam for graduating the 45-day course, different branches of the higher education system and complete their training. In addition, for those “exceptional” students, the Italian diplomat showed, the duration of the Polytechnic courses – which, under the education law of 1948, Article XVII, was a minimum of 4 years, while the courses in the institutes of higher education could last no less than 3 years (Article XVIII) – was reduced to two years. After that, graduates received the title of “exploitation engineer” and, with that qualification and function, they went directly into production. Like in the case of the summer technical courses, Baron Scammacca insisted, “these would-be engineers were to receive, throughout the duration of their university studies, salary and clothing from those factories, and in addition to that they were to have free accommodation and meals provided by the faculties” (doc. 2 in the annex). “It is easy to understand,” Scammacca specified on a critical tone in the “telespresso” sent on 6 December 1949 to the Italian Foreign Ministry, “which is the cultural level and training of such elements: suffice it to say that in the first year of Polytechnic, they are taught the four [arithmetic] operations and that the mathematics professors have been forced to adopt the textbook that a few years ago was used in the first classes of secondary school.”

The Italian diplomat was, of course, making reference, in this briefing, to Decree no. 381 of 24 September 1949, under which special classes had been set up for the training of technical exploitation engineers, with a duration of two years for workers with a practice of at least five years. What were still quite unclear were issues pertaining the total number of students and the number of professors who taught them, the emoluments they earned, as well as the total amount of the salaries the trainees received during their studies, paid by the factories that funded their specialization, or the expenses arising from the operation of canteens and dormitories, due to the policy of the regime of popular democracy to form loyal acolytes. It should be noted that by Decree no. 388 of 11 October 1949, the title of engineer was awarded to some categories of technicians. It is not clear on what legal basis that title was awarded and there is little data about the total number of people who received the title of engineer thus.

With hindsight, we should remember that the policy of training professionals who would serve the regime, with questionable qualifications but undisputed loyalty, continued in the early 1950s, throughout the period of the Stalinization process in Romania. Decree no. 185 of 19 July 1951 set up special courses for the training of engineers and technicians from among skilled workers who were under 30 years old and had been active in the production field for at least three years. These were courses with a duration of 4-5 years for engineers and two years for technicians. The salaries of those who attended them continued to be paid, in order to support them materially and out of the desire to stimulate their participation in those courses. In 1953, under Decree no. 343, special schools were transformed into Workers' Faculties, with courses lasting two years. What was dramatic about these schools was that some of the students who attended them had graduated only elementary school. On the other hand, the students were also compensated salary-wise, and it should be noted that

some of them were nominated politically, the recommendations coming from the central and local bodies of the Romanian Worker's Party and the Union of Working Youth, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of the Armed Forces, the Council of Ministers or the Ministry of Education.

Also in the "telespresso" of 6 December 1949, Minister Scammacca provided the authorities in Rome with a series of details on the implementation of the decision of 16 October 1948, for the establishment of special two-year schools for those who were active in the field of work. These schools, which offered secondary-level education, allowed the access of their graduates to higher education (universities and institutes of higher education), "under the same conditions and with the same rights," the Italian diplomat showed, "as young people who have completed the regular seven-year secondary school education." Baron Scammacca emphasized the unpleasant fact that those courses were, paradoxically, "exclusivist," being designed "exclusively to the workers nominated by the party organizations and the trade unions, on the basis of their attitudes and their ideological background, and aimed to quickly form a new ruling class, which would, in all areas of intellectual activity and production, take the place of those elements of the bourgeoisie that the regime was still forced to use, due to the lack of personnel, in colleges and in factories, in offices and in the existing professions." Also, the Italian Minister in Bucharest informed the Foreign Ministry in Rome on the preferential treatment given to the "new recruits of national culture" in Romania: bed and board, as well as free textbooks, while the factories where they were employed were supposed to provide them, throughout the duration of their studies, with the salary they had received before being admitted to that specialization. The briefing sent from the Italian Legation in the capital of Romania to the Foreign Ministry in Rome made special reference to the course curriculum, stating that it "meets the essential requirements of high school subject matters, albeit presented in the light of Marxist-Leninist doctrines."

Speaking about the opening of the courses at these special schools for two years, launched in the autumn of 1949 through ceremonies that conferred them a peculiar degree of solemnity, Minister Scammacca specified that "the Minister of Public Education spoke at the inauguration in Bucharest. After he illustrated the ideological and practical goals of the new school, he invited the teachers and the students to take the example, in their work, of everything that has been done and continues to be done in Russia for the training of a true leading socialist class."

ANNEX²³

1

Telespresso N. 1826/867

Indirizzo.....MINISTERO DEGLI AFFARI
ESTERI.....

ROMA

Bucarest, 1° novembre

1949

OGGETTO: Corpo didattico in Romania.

(Riferimento):

Dopo la eliminazione degli elementi ritenuti irriducibilmente contrari al regime o pericolosi, e dopo le assunzioni di nuovo personale fatte nel corso dell'anno, durante l'estate si sono svolti nelle principali città della Romania appositi corsi di orientamento per il corpo didattico, ai quali sono stati obbligati a prendere parte tutti gli insegnanti in servizio, pena altrimenti la perdita del posto.

Tali corsi hanno avuto la durata di un mese, e sono stati tenuti da docenti quasi sempre di scarso valore intellettuale e professionale, ma considerati particolarmente preparati nelle dottrine marxiste, che hanno naturalmente costituito la base degli insegnamenti impartiti.

Il corpo didattico romeno ha subito l'imposizione di tale obbligo con chiaro malcontento, sia per il regime poliziesco e di costrizione nel quale i corsi stessi si sono svolti, sia per gli argomenti dei quali si è preteso l'apprendimento, come se si trattasse di alunni delle classi elementari, non tenendosi conto nè della cultura, nè della preparazione didattica di ciascuno.

Dalla mattina alle 7 sino alle 20 della sera, salva una breve interruzione per il pasto di mezzogiorno, da consumarsi obbligatoriamente nella sede dei corsi, professori e maestri sono stati infatti sottoposti per 30 giorni consecutivi al fuoco tambureggiante di lezioni e conferenze sul materialismo storico e dialettico, di lettura e commenti degli editoriali del giornale ufficiale "SCANTEIA," di riunioni dedicate all'illustrazione dei testi comunisti e di interrogazioni sulla materia e sugli argomenti trattati nelle lezioni di ogni singola giornata.

Un'estrema severità ha regolato lo svolgimento di questi corsi: due assenze erano sufficienti per l'eliminazione dal corso, il che significava l'allontanamento dal servizio; ma ciò che ha pesato maggiormente sull'atmosfera di quelle giornate è stata la permanente presenza, sentita e constatata da ognuno, di elementi che, frammischiati agli ascoltatori, avevano l'incarico di raccogliere e riferire le reazioni e i commenti.

²³ The documents are preserved at Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Roma, Archivio Storico Diplomatico, Fond Affari Politici, 1946-1950, Romania, busta no. 9 (1949).

Al termine delle lezioni si sono tenuti veri e propri esami, scritti ed orali, e coloro che non li hanno superati sono stati passati nelle liste del personale da epurare.

Mentre la fine del corso è stata accolta dalla totalità degli insegnanti con un respiro di sollievo, sembra che i risultati constatati dalle autorità didattiche e politiche non siano stati molto soddisfacenti e ne sarebbe prova il fatto che numerose nuove eliminazioni sono state effettuate in questi giorni tra il personale docente delle scuole, e che si provvede a ricostituire i quadri dell'insegnamento con elementi del tutto nuovi, reclutati con misure d'eccezione e in base a una valutazione prevalentemente politica.

È stata infatti in questi giorni attuata per la prima volta una decisione ministeriale secondo la quale non solo i licenziati e coloro che hanno superato gli esami universitari possono essere nominati nell'insegnamento di stato senza alcun esame di concorso ma, in base a un facile esame di qualificazione, possono essere assunti in qualità di professori anche i licenziati del liceo, i quali dopo aver funzionato due anni come supplenti saranno nominati professori definitivi.

È superfluo far rilevare come queste immissioni di personale didattico non preparato, nè culturalmente nè professionalmente, contribuiranno a far maggiormente scadere il livello dell'insegnamento romeno, livello che si è già abbassato notevolmente in questi ultimi anni, sia a causa dei nuovi programmi didattici come per la esclusione dalle scuole di molti tra gli elementi migliori, colpevoli di appartenere alla classe borghese, al posto dei quali sono stati portati e vengono in ogni modo favoriti i figli degli operai e dei contadini solo perchè tali, indipendentemente dalle loro maggiori o minori attitudini allo studio.

IL MINISTRO
(Scammacca)

2

LEGAZIONE D'ITALIA
BUCAREST

(due copie in più)

TELESPRESSO N. 2011/956
MINISTERO DEGLI AFFARI ESTERI

ROMA

Bucarest, 6 dicembre 1949

La scuola in Romania. Preparazione "accelerata" di tecnici.

La legge dello scorso anno per la riforma dell'insegnamento superiore, prevede per gli operai messi in evidenza nelle fabbriche e che avessero seguito uno speciale corso d'istruzione media di due anni, la possibilità di iscriversi alle Università per conseguirvi una laurea.

Probabilmente per la necessità di affrettare la formazione di tecnici e dirigenti proletari, – mentre si procede con ritmo sempre più rapido all'allontanamento da ogni attività lavorativa della classe borghese – durante la scorsa estate, e precisamente il 16 agosto, sono stati aperti presso gli Istituti Politecnici di Bucarest, Iassy e Timisoara e presso la Facoltà di Meccanica di Cluj e Brasov dei corsi accelerati per operai aspiranti all'ammissione nei suindicati Istituti superiori.

Tali corsi hanno avuto la durata di 45 giorni, dopo di che si è tenuto un esame, in base al quale molte centinaia di giovani operai, forniti del solo titolo di licenza elementare, sono entrati quest'autunno in varie branche dell'insegnamento superiore.

Ma non basta: per tali eccezionali studenti la durata dei corsi del Politecnico che è, secondo la legge, di 4 anni, è stata ridotta a due, dopo i quali essi riceveranno il titolo di ingegneri "di sfruttamento," ed entreranno con tale titolo e con tali funzioni nella produzione.

Come già durante i corsi dell'estate, i suddetti futuri ingegneri riceveranno per tutta la durata degli studi universitari il salario e il vestiario dalle rispettive fabbriche nonchè avranno vitto ed alloggio gratuito dalle Facoltà.

È facile comprendere quale sia il livello culturale e la preparazione di tali elementi: basti dire che nel primo anno del Politecnico vengono insegnati ad essi le quattro operazioni, e i professori di matematica sono stati obbligati ad adottare il libro di testo che alcuni anni fa era usato nelle prime due classi del ginnasio.

In conformità inoltre a quanto prevede la legge 1948 per la riforma dell'insegnamento medio, hanno recentemente cominciato a funzionare in varie città romene speciali scuole secondarie ad indirizzo tecnico della durata di soli due anni, dopo i quali si può accedere alle Università ed agli Istituti d'Insegnamento Superiore nelle stesse condizioni e con gli stessi diritti dei giovani che hanno seguito il regolare corso settennale di studi liceali.

Tali scuole sono aperte esclusivamente agli operai designati dalle organizzazioni di partito e sindacali per le loro attitudini e per la loro preparazione ideologica, ed hanno lo scopo di formare rapidamente una nuova classe dirigente, che in tutti i campi dell'attività intellettuale e produttiva prenda il posto di quegli elementi della borghesia che il regime, per deficienza di quadri, è oggi ancora obbligato ad utilizzare nelle facoltà come nelle fabbriche e negli uffici come nelle professioni sopravvivenenti.

Il governo ha deciso di accordare particolari condizioni di vita e di trattamento a queste nuove reclute della cultura nazionale: esse avranno, infatti, l'alloggio, il vitto e i libri gratuitamente, mentre le aziende di provenienza dovranno continuare a corrispondere ad esse, per tutta la durata degli studi, il salario che percepivano.

I programmi comprendono gli elementi essenziali delle materie liceali, tutti però presentati alla luce delle dottrine marxisto-leniniste.

I corsi di queste Scuole sono stati aperti nel mese scorso con cerimonie alle quali è stato dato particolare risalto di solennità: a Bucarest è intervenuto all'inaugurazione il Ministro dell'Insegnamento Pubblico, che, dopo aver illustrato gli scopi ideologici e pratici della nuova scuola, ha invitato professori e alunni a prendere esempio nel loro lavoro da quanto è stato fatto e si continua a fare in Russia per la formazione di una vera classe dirigente socialista.

IL MINISTRO
(Scammacca)