

FROM THE ROMANIAN WOMEN'S GROUP ACTIVITY, CRAIOVA BRANCH

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Abstract. *On September 21, 1933, was established in Craiova, responding to the appeal of Alexandrina Cantacuzino, the Branch County Association of Romanian Women's Group.*

During the meeting for the establishment of the branch, Maria Budeanu, who was chosen branch president, presented the purpose of this society: "Highly trained and well-schooled, women will be able to speak with more prestige, proving the seriousness of their actions, which does not aim personal gratification and ambition, asking for nothing, demanding nothing for them individually, but for all Romanian women, seeking for the right to honest work, to serve the country and to bring in public life all cleanliness of some souls imbued with public responsibilities.

Education, public health, ethics, social development, economic and financial welfare of the country, all these branches of activity should be investigated by women; as domestic life is directly linked to it".

The branch comprises 30 members but their number increased, in June 1934 reaching 180 subscribing members from all social categories.

In September 1941 the society ceased operations until June 19, 1942 but resumed its work until 1944.

Keywords: *National Romanian Orthodox Women's Society, Craiova, Maria Budeanu, conference, cultural institution.*

National Romanian Orthodox Women's Society performed its activity in 1910-1948, taking part in all major political, social and cultural events that occurred during this period in our country.

Founder and president of the society from 1910 to 1944, Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino conducted a sustained social and educational activities to youth, being the initiator of many philanthropic activities. The funds collected were directed to the construction of schools, to children and poor families, restoration of churches, etc¹.

"The Orthodox Society and the Group of Romanian Women - Alexandrina Cantacuzino stated in a conference held in Craiova in June 1934 – are based on national ideology which in these troubled times that we are going through, represents a foundation in the construction of the state"².

The main claims required by the Romanian Women's group were the following: the right to vote and to education, right to work in all professions, equal pay for equal work, legal and economic rights for all women in Romania, the fight against all forms of discrimination. The society also called for the love of family and nation, love of labor, of order, hygiene, organized conferences, cultural circles and various other practical activities: cuisine, sewing, home economics, kindergarten, etc...

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Maria Colonel Budeanu was chosen branch president, vice-president Elena Iacob Constantinescu, teacher, Secretary Dulciu Captain Constantinescu, teacher, cashier Maior Melinescu Pya.

Members in the committee were: Elena Foleanu, Elisei Stanescu, Elena Ciuceanu. The branch comprises 30 members but their number increased, in June 1934 reaching 180 subscribing members from all social categories⁴.

The branch conducted an intense work of information through history conferences, national literature, hygiene, contests, contributing to the establishment of schools for apprentices, kindergartens, boardings, management courses organized at the School of housekeeping, "Dima Popovici" school canteens for poor students, workshops for weaving, a placement office for members in need, offers for working at home, the organization of a social service at asylums for found children and the elderly, establishment of feminist library in Craiova from donations of members, as a librarian was appointed Foleanu Elena.

The necessary funds are provided from donations, legacies, subscriptions, fees, raffles and of the amounts collected from conferences, cultural festivals and concerts organized by the society.

Conferences were held as "The national situation of women suffrage worldwide" in which Maria Budeanu presented the inferior situation of Romanian women compared with women in other countries, showing that: "our duty

¹ Debates of the Assembly of Deputies, 25 of 17 December 1910, p. 331.

² *Documents*, The Oltenia Museum collection, inv. I 12457, p. 24.

³ *Appeal to the Mesdames and Mesdemoiselles*.

⁴ Official report No. 16 of June 3, 1933.

is to fight to obtain political rights". Other conferences, feminism and women's claims: "The role of mother in child's education as man and future Christian", "Women in Nordic Countries" "Strange figures of women in the great French Revolution", "Social and political role of today woman", etc... In the conference "Careers for the young women" sustained by Maria Budeanu, she showed how necessary it is to "turn girls towards liberal performance, such as: law, in which girls show labor and competence, the press, to which they have real inclination; diplomacy, where they manage very well.

Girls - Maria Budeanu continued - can be just as good architects, engineers, care nurses, working in the judiciary system, where women proved to be at the height of their mission, in all countries where they have this right; arts and plastic arts careers, etc...

Instead, our country could consider women taking part in farm management, in rational land agriculture, horticulture, etc. Women can show merchantable quality"⁵.

Professor Stefan Ciuceanu stated that "in the current social status, the women's claims are a necessity that should be immediately solved". The society had a positive impact on intellectuals in Craiova, thus at the meeting of April 21, 1934 "attended by active members of the subsidiary and a very large and select audience, which didn't find room in the reception hall and had to stand" noted in the minutes of this occasion. When the subsidiary was established in Turnu-Severin, on 2 April 1934, at the Palace of Culture, Maria Budeanu held the conference "Achievements and feminist projects" in which she talked about "the role that Romanian Ladies played in history" stating that "in our country first started fighting for women's emancipation in 1848, and in 1866, during the vote on the constitution was put into question a woman's right to vote, as was not given any until today"⁶.

On May 23, 1937 G.N.F.R. Craiova branch presented at the National Theatre before a large assistance, a cultural social evening, with a diversified program, consisting of choirs, national games, reading meaningful events from history, etc., attended by students from Girls Regular School and School No. 1 Voievodul Mihai from Craiova.

The meeting was opened with the conference "The care of mother and child" held by Maria Constantinescu. The evolution of worldly life changed profoundly the situation of women in society, her work could not be confined only within the home, but naturally she participates in social and economic life of the nation, from which arises naturally concerns into policy and legislative direction of the country.

"She asks the right to vote as an inalienable right arising from the very principle of representative democracy" - Maria Budeanu stated in the conference "Women Vote" held at Sala Select in November 1937 - in a democratic regime the sovereign power should belong to all people and not only part of the people, as the Parliament should be the accurate picture of the whole nation. They called for "the right to vote for Romanian women so they would cooperate along men to strengthen the Greater Romania"⁷.

At the conclusion of the conference two telegrams were written which were sent to the Prime Minister Gheorghe Tatarascu and to Interior Minister Franasovici with the following content: "The women from Oltenia gathered here today at 12 December 1937, require to work in a practical way to ascension of the country, for which we respectfully ask to grant them political rights in full equality with men, to be put in a position to exploit the qualities and virtues in favor of Country".

The representatives of Romanian Women Group, of the branch of Craiova held conferences in all towns in Oltenia; Calafat, Caracal, Râmnicu Vâlcea, and Turnu-Severin as well as in other parts in Romania, such as: Bucharest, Fagaras, Brasov, Zalau etc. The amounts collected from the conferences held by President Maria Budeanu at Fagaras were donated to the local branch for erecting a bust of Doamna Stanca, wife of Mihai Viteazul, as a tribute to that "which shed bitter tears in Fagaras Fortress"⁸.

As a result of intense activities in 1935 on 8, 9 and 10 November took place in Craiova, the General Congress of National Women Group of Romania under the patronage of Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino. The congress was attended by 70 delegates from across the country, accommodated at the hotel New York and Minerva⁹.

Carol Lyric Theatre provided free room for conferences on 10 November. In other days the meetings were held in the Salon of the prefecture. The City Hall also contributed to the sum of 6130 lei from the budget of the town for the festive meal at the restaurant "Cina" in the evening of November 10 in honor of Princess Al. Cantacuzino and of those who participated in the Congress¹⁰.

The congress opened proceedings with a general conference in the room of Palace Hotel under the chairmanship of Al. Cantacuzino. It was followed by discussion boards. The role of women in child education was being discussed and the importance of education, hard condition in which it is carried out due to lack of funds. "What do we want? - stated Al. Cantacuzino in his speech - We demand for laws to protect all women, all children, all who are unfortunate without a fault, laws to guide women in the right way. We ask for that the right to labor that should be given

⁵ *Documents*, The Oltenia Museum collection, inv. I 12457, pp. 42-43.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

¹⁰ Department County of the national archive from Dolj, file 68/1935, f. 133.

for each male and female". In conclusion Al. Cantacuzino showed that, after the success of this congress, "we will be judged by the whole Oltenia and across the country; whether it is appropriate to give us the right to vote"¹¹.

On November 9 Craiova Branch gave a banquet at the School of household Dima Popovici and offered a trip to Maglavit.

Stressing the importance of the action that took place, the President of Craiova Branch - Maria Budeanu - expressed the wish that the woman should be "always smarter" and continued addressing not only to the audience but also to the authorities, she wanted to add: "Let's provide cultural and political education to women to be prepared for tomorrow; even though, that tomorrow will be more than another generation, girls and young women today will know how to guide then their children". On February 7, 1938 took place at primary school of girls' "Elena Cuza Doamna" the opening of the canteen of the society. After the religious service preached by Father Bârneanu, the principal Stanculescu thanked on behalf of teaching staff and children, and the mayor promised his support. Then the representatives of the society served with milk and bread to 60 poor children from the School of boys Trișcu and to girls from school "Elena Cuza Doamna". The necessary bread was given for free from the mill Barbu Druga¹².

The rupture of the country's borders, the outbreak of World War II led the women in Craiova Branch to contribute whatever they could to help "our soldiers that protect the borders". They made for them 100 pairs of wool stockings and gloves from funds group¹³.

"Noting the Vienna Dictate, Romanian Women Group, Craiova Branch sent their greetings to Romanian women sisters who remained in the ceded territories.

- Heartbroken, we the Romanian women from the Kingdom, addressing our sisters from Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina, our deepest sorrow for separation from the mother country with the belief that as we knew for centuries to fight for our unification all in one country, so now, temporarily separated we will face aversive fate, opposing those who have invaded the country, staunch and passionate resistance to our Romanian soul, which has no limits

- With faith in God and the salvation of our people, today as yesterday, as always us Romanian women from everywhere, confident in the strength of life of our Romanian nation, not to lose hope of tomorrow, but united over the boundaries between soul and a feeling, to resist strongly these cruel attempts that we go through"¹⁴.

Maria Budeanu
President G.F.R. Oltenia

On September 4, 1941 the entire branch committee distributed gifts to wounded soldiers of the Red Cross Hospital of Craiova, gifts purchased from the company funds. The 500 soldiers injured in the hospital, received a packet of cigarettes, a slice of cake or horn- shaped roll, a box of matches, books in each room, a lamp with oil in the dressing room worth 700 lei. The total amount was spent for 7660 lei.

For the work in the benefit of communities and the soldiers all the ladies on the committee were decorated with commemorative medal King Carol the First¹⁵.

In September 1941 the society ceased operations until June 19, 1942 but resumed its work until 1944.

Romanian women group was a cultural institution that enjoyed broad support from intellectuals and the Roman officials, contributing to the moral and cultural development of all social classes in our country.

¹¹ *Documents*, p. 52.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 43.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 72-73.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 87.



Fig. 1. Maria Budeanu.

Apel către Doamne și Domnișoare

„Gruparea Națională a Femeilor Române” de sub conducerea D-nei Alexandrina G. Cantacuzino din București, are ca scop pregătirea femeilor de a deveni cetățence leale și conștiente de noile lor îndatoriri și drepturi.

Intrunindu-se într'un mănunchi puternic și disciplinat, femeile vor putea să se rostească cu mai mult prestigiu, dovedind seriozitatea acțiunii lor, care nu are ca scop satisfaceri și ambiții personale, ne cerând nimic, ne voinind nimic individual pentru ele, cerând însă pentru toate femeile române, dreptul de a munci cinstit, de a sluji Țara și de a aduce în viața publică toată curătenia unor suflete pătrunse de răspunderile obștești.

Invățământul, educația, sănătatea publică, etica, dezvoltarea socială, propășirea economică și financiară a țării, toate aceste ramuri de activitate trebuie să fie cercetate de femei; căci viața casnică este în legătură directă cu aceasta.

Pentru realizarea scopului „Grupărei”, dorim să înființăm și în orașul D-voastră o filială a Asociației Noastre Femeniste, pentru care fac un călduros apel la toată intelectualitatea și la solidaritatea noastră de femei de a răspunde la chemarea D-nei Alexandrina Cantacuzino, pentru ca împreună să luptăm pentru câștigarea drepturilor noastre firești.

Inscrieți-vă cu toată convingerea în „Gruparea Națională a Femeilor Române, al cărui sediu pentru Oltenia este în Str. Bolintineanu No. 2 Craiova, unde puteți cere orice informațiuni.

Maria St. Col. Budeanu
Prezidenta Filialei Craiova.

Tip. „VICTORIA”, Justiției 6 Craiova.

Fig. 2. The G.N.F.R. “*Appeal to the Mesdames and Mesdemoiselles*”.

Comitetul de conducere al Filialei Craiova

S ^{na} Maria Lt. Col. Budeanu St. Bolintineanu 2	Prezidenta
S ^{na} Constanța Lt. Simigrescu St. Jitianu 3	Vici Prezidenta
S ^{na} Maria Lt. Col. Tandou St. Jitianu 56	Casiera
S^{na} Dulcea Cpt. Constantinescu St. Imp. Traian 139	Secretara
S ^{na} Elisa A. Stănescu St. Unirii 32	
S ^{na} Zoe Cpt. Constantinescu St. Calomirescu 143	} Membre in Comitet.
S ^{na} Nella Gheorghesan St. Petru Poni 13	
S ^{na} Ortansa Cpt. Ileriu St. Chiriac 22	
S ^{na} Elena R. Ciuceanu St. N. Bălcescu 14	
S ^{na} Elena Foleanu St. Caporal 24	
S ^{na} Leana Băntescu St. Mircea 5	
S ^{na} Mimi Lt. Col. Flavian St. Impăratul Traian 56	
S ^{na} Alexandrina Amărășteanu St. Impăratul Traian 11	
S ^{na} Angela Voiculescu Secretara St. Brestei 26	
S ^{na} Sm. Chetoianu Avocat St. Bolintineanu 7	

Comitetul pe anul 1938

Prezidenta	S ^{na} Maria Col. Budeanu	St. Bolintineanu 2
Vici	S ^{na} Elena Col. Simionescu	St. Jitianu 3
Secretara	S ^{na} Angela Voiculescu	St. Brestei 26
Casiera	S ^{na} Maria Lt. Col. Tandou	St. Jitianu 56
Membre in Comitet	S ^{na} Gheorghesan	St. Petru Poni 13
	S ^{na} Mimi Col. Flavian	St. Impăratul Traian 56
	S ^{na} Elena Lt. Ciuceanu	St. N. Bălcescu 14
	S ^{na} Sm. Chetoianu Avocat	St. Bolintineanu 7
	S ^{na} Amărășteanu	St. Impăratul Traian 11

Fig. 3. G.N.F.R. Craiova Branch Board Committee.

Proces-Verbal № 67

Întâlnire Septembrie anul 1940 în urma convocării
 D^{nei} Maria Col. Budeanu, prezidenta Soc. G.F.K. a avut
 loc o sedință la sediul în str. Bolintineanu.

D^{na} Budeanu înmânează doamnelor din Comitet
 brevetele de decorare cu medalia Comemorativă
 Regele Carol I^{cu}, care au fost decorate toate doamnele
 din Comitet în urma propunerii sale, pentru munca
 depusă în folosul concentratilor, doamnele lucrând
 personal 100 per. ciorapi lână și 100 per. mănusi,
 multumindu-le pentru efortul care îl găsește tot-
 deauna între colaboratoarele sale.

Se ia în discuțiune diferite propuneri în vederea
 acțiunii din toamnă, după care sedința se încheie.

Prezidentă Maria Col. Budeanu
 Vice Prezidentă

Secrerașă M. H. Col. Sandoi
 Secretară

Membre în
 Comitet

Nella Ghenghiescu
 Maria Col. Halibici
 Elena Căciulescu
 R. Ciuciu
 M. Col. Lierna

Fig. 4. Craiova Branch minute of proceedings no. 67, in which the members are handed the decoration patent with King Carol I commemorative medal.