

Communist Romania's Cultural Cold War, 1947-1960*

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Usually, after 1989, the scholars whose main field of interest was Romanian culture and society under Communism centered their attention on the problem of the postwar literature with special focus on the relationship between the writers and political power. Consequently, they were more often than not neglecting both the involvement of Romanian intelligentsia in Cold War cultural diplomacy and propaganda, and the consequences of such commitments for literature, arts, and music. Moreover, Romanian historians and political scientists specialized mainly in post-war foreign affairs focused on the political and military dimensions of East-West relations during communism. Subsequently, the very notion of a "cultural cold war" held little significance in Romanian history writing. Only recently has the concept gained academic interest, but its applicability is limited to present day internal-intellectual disputes.

The main objective of this study is to analyze both the decision-making process behind the dynamics of Cold War Romanian cultural diplomacy, and the Propaganda and Agitation Department's strategy to manipulate and enroll the Romanian intellectuals and artists within the anti-capitalist and "anti-cosmopolitanism" front during Stalinism. The chronological limits (1947-1960) do serve to circumscribe a period of the history of Romanian culture and diplomacy, for it encompasses the period of time marked by the creation of the Cominform (September 1947) and by the beginning of a softening in tone of East-West relations and the diminishing control over the literature and arts by the Communist Party. The aim of my article is to look at the mechanisms employed at the level of cultural diplomacy by identifying and profiling its characteristics in the context of international relations between 1947 and 1960. My paper will focus both on the main characteristics and changes that occurred in the Romania's cold war culture and foreign cultural diplomacy, the latter generated by the international events. I will also emphasize the discourses accompanying policy shifts, while searching for the causes of the Romanian propaganda's vehement stand during the battle against the Western „world“. In addition, the paper will dwell upon relevant biographical profiles and significant political and administrative actions of those who were involved in cultural

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external propaganda, being communist leaders such as Leonte Răutu, Ana Pauker, Ghizela Vass etc.). This particular section will heavily rely upon recent declassified archives of the *Agitprop*, Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) Central Committee's Department for External Relations, and RWP's Chancellery.

My working hypothesis is that the Propaganda and Agitation Department had an overwhelming role in defining the main elements of the communist cultural policy, in Romania and abroad. The *Agitprop* promoted the ideological uniformity and enrollment of the intellectual and artistic life. Therefore, until 1953-1954, the Romanian Communist regime humbly imitated the Soviet anti-Western cultural policies, which made it, in the later years, more difficult for Romanian writers, film directors, actors, and artists to penetrate or have access to Western cultural milieus and scenes.

Trying to complete the research, I used primary sources from the Central Committee of the RWP – Propaganda and Agitation Department, preserved at the Central Historical National Archives (Bucharest). I tried to analyze the influence of the major international events of the Cold War (1948 Soviet-Yugoslav schism, Soviet-Israeli dispute, Geneva conferences, and the 1956 Hungarian revolution) upon RWP's (cultural) policies towards Serbian, Jewish, Hungarian minorities living in Romania and, on the other hand, towards Yugoslavia, Israel, Hungary within the bilateral relations. My article is also an attempt to clarify of the various facets of a Cold War cultural diplomacy from late 1940s until mid-1960s carried out by a political regime that stood out through a ceaseless ideological offensive, which was part and parcel of its internationally projected propagandistic image. It is also an opportunity to publicize some relevant archival materials. Although I did not neglect the anti-American stance of the Romanian communist regime, I decided to approach somewhere else the topic of the Romanian-American cultural relations in the 1940s and 1950s¹.

Russian: the Main Language of Romania's Cold War Culture

Immediately after World War II, the Romanian pro-communist government, led by Petru Groza, orientated cultural international relations towards the USSR. By the autumn of 1947, the subordination to the Moscow's interests was obvious. In addition to the Association for the Strengthening the Relations with Soviet Union (ARLUS), and other Soviet-type Friendship Societies (with Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary), the Romanian Cultural Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (IRRCS) pursued an intense activity in the early 1950s, but the contacts with the "capitalist" states were at the lowest level. ARLUS, IRRCS, and the external-oriented Division from the Ministry of Arts and Information (later the Committee for Culture and Arts), Central Committee of the RWP's Department for

¹ For the postwar policies of the American cultural diplomacy behind the Iron Curtain and especially in Romania, see Bogdan Barbu, *Vin americanii! Prezența simbolică a Statelor Unite în România războiului rece, 1945-1971*, Bucharest, 2006.

External Relations, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented the institutional framework for external cultural propaganda. With the exception of the last two, these institutions were put under the supervision of the Propaganda and Agitation Department/Section (*Agitprop*) whose leader, Leonte Răutu, published in a 1949 speech entitled *Against Bourgeois Cosmopolitanism and Objectivism in the Field of Social Sciences* ideologically mimicked the newly instated Zhdanovist principle². This manifesto of Stalinist dogmatism in Romania was the epitome of the cultural-ideological external propaganda philosophy until the early 1960s.

As I previously mentioned, one of the main tools used by the authorities was ARLUS, an organization supported by famous and opportunist writers and intellectuals³, such as Mihail Sadoveanu, who was once accused “to veer about like a weathercock”. One of the ARLUS’s tasks was to promote and spread the Russian language within Romanian society. Between 1945 and 1960/1963 Russian was extremely privileged by the Communist regime and not perceived as a foreign language in official levels. Meanwhile the other languages (French, English, and German) were neglected at schools and universities. But the effective penetration of Russian in the Romanian schools was made more difficult because of the lack of skilled teaching cadres.

In order to encourage Romanian cultural convergence with the Soviet Union the pro-communist government had introduced Russian as subject matter in Romanian schools in 1945. The Ministry of Education, led by the Social-Democrat leader Ștefan Voitec, did not use the ideological reasoning, but instead used a geopolitical explanation for the introduction of Russian language to school curriculum. He argued that all Romania’s neighbors except Hungary belonged to the great family of Slavic peoples, Romania was surrounded by Slavic language countries – most notably the USSR – and moreover Russian literature, mainly the technical one, could help students improve their skills and practical abilities⁴.

However, until the autumn of 1947, the Romanian government was not politically uniformed. It included also bourgeois and pro-capitalist ministers such as Gheorghe Tătărescu, vice-president of the cabinet and Foreign Affairs minister. This hindered the communists in their efforts to Stalinize the Education sector. The overwhelming majority of the intellectual elite was French speaking and had pro-Western stances; its pro-Soviet stand was only for appearances’ sake. Moreover, in many private High Schools throughout the country, French language teaching continued even after 1944 and as a result the Education Department had to regulate the exam procedures, the school leaving examination. On January 2, 1946 the Ministry of Education issued the rules concerning the French baccalauréat⁵,

² Leonte Răutu, *Împotriva cosmopolitismului și obiectivismului burghez în științele sociale*, Bucharest, 1949.

³ Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx. O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc*, Bucharest, 2005, p. 106-148.

⁴ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [hereafter: ANIC], Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri, 1944-1959, file no. 8/1945, p. 130.

⁵ *Monitorul Oficial*, part I-A, CXIV, No. 2, Wednesday, January 2, 1946, p. 19.

prolonging for five years the regulation regarding French High School exams in Romanian educational system.

The Suppression of Western Cultural Institutes and Libraries

However, after Sklarska Poreba (September 1947, the first reunion of the Cominform) rapidly occurring events jeopardized and precipitated the disintegration of Romanian – French cultural relations, and especially the bilateral cultural agreements. Moreover, the Communist leadership and the Government rejected a French proposal to create a School in Romania for the children of the Western diplomats as well as forbade the functioning of the French Library and Italian Cultural Institute in Bucharest. France was then labeled by the Soviet and Romanian foreign propaganda as being yoked by the Marshall Plan and therefore potentially dangerous. The French cultural influence in East Central Europe had to be strictly limited⁶.

On the other hand, in the fall of 1947 an insignificant group of Romanians living abroad, especially in France, gathered in Paris (Jean Goujon Hall) in order to express their solidarity with the Romanian government. They decided to send a telegram to Prime-minister Petru Groza stating their “gratitude for the courageous undertaking regarding Romania’s economical growth, cultural revival, development and consolidation of democracy, as well as the preoccupation for defending national independence and sovereignty.”⁷ In fact, the preparations for this reunion were guided from Bucharest and followed the removal of Gheorghe Tătărescu, minister of Foreign Affairs, and head of the National Liberal Party dissidence from the government. Immediately after this event, on December 12, 1947 the Groza cabinet issued a so-called decision concerning especially the cultural contacts with Western Europe and the United States. According to the new governmental order, all commitments and pledges made in the past by both Romanian governments and State cultural institutions regarding the artistic and intellectual cooperation with foreign countries had to be checked out by a commission that included the undersecretaries of State from three Departments – Foreign Affairs, Interior, and Propaganda (later renamed the *Ministry of Information*).

On October 20, 1948 during the RWP Secretariat gathering, Ana Pauker, the successor of Tătărescu as foreign minister⁸, presented the demands of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the creation of a School in Bucharest for French speaking diplomats’ children who were in Bucharest with their parents. Not

⁶ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Bucharest US Mission, General Records, 1948, Box 87, Rumanian Press attacks “Western Culture” in conjunction with Denunciation of French-Rumanian Cultural Agreements.

⁷ Cristian Vasile, *Considerații privind relațiile culturale externe ale României în anii 1945–1953*, “Revista Istorică”, 18 (2007), 1-2, p. 134.

⁸ See for details Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist*, Berkeley, Calif., 2001.

only did she argue for the rejection of the Quai d'Orsay's request but called for the closing of the French Institute in Bucharest, implying it was an espionage agency. Under the pretext of French abuses against Romanian officials and citizens, the Romanian Foreign Affairs minister insisted on closing the French Institute even at the risk of losing the Romanian School in France (Fontenays-aux-Roses) as a result of predictable French retaliation policy. The RWP Secretariat approved in principle Ana Pauker's proposal to refuse the founding of a French School in Bucharest and also decided that in the future the French and Italian Institutes would be shut down⁹. The closing of the French Institute was also on the agenda of the next Secretariat meeting on November 17, 1948, when Ana Pauker again invoked the provocations of the French government. The Romanian ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Paris of suppressing both the Romanian Association of France's Friends (RAFF) and its newspaper. Pauker also pretended that Police arrested both the top leaders of the Association and the French citizens together with Romanian excursionists who supported the actions of RAFF. In fact, the Romanian diplomats in France carried things too far, went beyond their competence and the French authorities reacted promptly. Ana Pauker considered that "the time had arrived to close down the French Institute and to expel its functionaries."¹⁰ The French high school exams were also eliminated.

Despite such strong opposition, the French Institute continued to function until 1950, although the Romanian government demanded France diplomatic officers to cease the support for it. In fact, the French Library in Bucharest remained opened to Romanian students and scholars because the French Legation's Information Office took up some of the Institute's duties. American, British, and Italian diplomatic missions took similar actions and used their offices in order to continue spreading in Romania cultural propaganda, books, movies etc. To prevent this type of subterfuge and to frighten Bucharest's readers and other frequenters of Western (crypto) Institutes and Libraries, the communist leadership forbade the activity of all such Information Offices while arresting Romanian library goers. Among the latter was Șerban Papacostea, a recent History graduate from the University of Bucharest and usual reader of the French Library. In March 1950, Romanian authorities imprisoned Șerban Papacostea for "administrative punishment"¹¹, that is six months forced labor without any legal justification, without a trial and sentence. He was jailed together with other hundreds of students at the Danube-Black Sea Canal, the site of well-known Romanian labor camps, where many intellectuals, bourgeois, and representatives of rich peasantry (*kulaks*) were exterminated, especially during 1949-1953. The Romanian *Agitprop*, Leonte Răutu personally, encouraged and urged the writers to approach the topic of the construction of the artificial waterway. In 1951, an extraordinary talented young prose writer, Petru Dumitriu, published an 800 pages cruel novel titled *Drum fără pulbere* (Road without Dust)¹², praising the Canal as a

⁹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Cancelarie, file no. 48/1948, p. 4-5.

¹⁰ Ibidem, file no. 57/1948, p. 3.

¹¹ Gavin Bowd, *La France et la Roumanie communiste*, Paris, 2008, p. 111.

¹² Petru Dumitriu, *Drum fără pulbere*, Bucharest, 1951.

remarkable achievement and falsifying the historical facts. The book was later translated into German in 1953¹³.

The Romanian School in France

On the other hand, as I anticipated, Romania had lost the buildings of its School in France from Fontenays-aux-Roses, near Paris. In fact was a huge loss for the Romanian culture. The Romanian School in France was established in 1921 due to the efforts of Nicolae Iorga, the Romania's greatest historian, and its model was the American and West European Schools or Academies founded in the Greek and Roman classical culture cities (Athens and Rome)¹⁴. Instead of Rome and Athens the Romanian Parliament preferred Rome and Paris, the capitals of two countries with neo-Latin languages like Romania.

Among the main goals were: combating the hostile propaganda, especially what was called Hungarian historiographical campaign in the context of 1920 Trianon Treaty; the pursuit of advanced research especially in history and philology; the School offered grants and fellowships for Romanian researchers, artists and students; in return they had to present conferences and lectures. The School from Fontenays-aux-Roses was both boarding school and institute of cultural propaganda. In fact, the Law regarding the education reform (1948) and the deterioration of French-Romanian relations closed the Romanian School in France¹⁵; a part of the library was lost or sold, or temporarily sheltered at the Romanian Embassy in Paris. After 1948, a few former members (fellows) of the School together with other émigrés created a Romanian Center for [Humanistic] Research, a continuation of the School; they elected Mircea Eliade, the well-known historian of religions as honorary president of the Center¹⁶.

Foreign Students in Romania

In 1948 Romanians lost the School from Fontenays-aux-Roses, an *intellectual embassy*, and moreover the young generation was hindered to attend Western and French Universities. The only option was Soviet Union educational network. On the other hand, Communist Romania's Universities received students mainly from the Socialist pro-Soviet bloc. A report from April 30, 1954 concerning the situation of foreign students in Romania during the academic year 1953-1954 pointed out that the numerous groups of students came from North Korea, Greece, Yugoslavia (many of them were in Romania as political refugees too), and only a

¹³ Idem, *Der Kanal*, Berlin, 1953.

¹⁴ Petre Țurlea, *Școala Română din Franța*, Bucharest, 1994, p. 8. Due too to the financial support provided by the school young philosopher Octavian Viața could stay in France and Germany and became one of Martin Heidegger's doctoral students.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

few from Western countries. The monthly stipend provided to 724 foreign Students was 600 lei, a reduced grant. Some students from capitalist countries such as Finland and Argentina objected to the way were treated by the Romanian authorities and complained vigorously showing the bad housing, inadequate health care, and unhealthy or expensive food served at the universities' canteens¹⁷. Only in the spring of 1954 the Romanian authorities (the Ministry of Interior Trade) took the necessary measures to establish a special canteen for these foreign students (that is inexpensive prices: 7 lei per daily meal). But, like in the Soviet case¹⁸, the efforts to attract and please the foreign students were not always successful; and one could talk – at least for the beginning of 1950s – about a Romanian failure to assure the comfort of foreign students.

Romania's Cultural Relations with its Neighbors: Hungary and Yugoslavia

Another difficult task for the Communist government was the reconciliation with Hungary; that is the improvement of bilateral cultural relations. On November 25, 1947 the two governments sign a bilateral cultural agreement which was adopted by the Romanian communist parliament (Great National Assembly) on April 21, 1948 in the same day with the Law No. 116 concerning the ratification of the Convention for the cultural cooperation between Romania and Hungary which stated that: "Hostile forces hindered the two people in knowing each other better and hampered free cultural exchanges"; Romania and Hungary reiterated their commitment to remove all elements liable to offend the other part such as: actions, words, references from textbooks, public representations, and other cultural manifestations. One of the main objectives of these agreements was the enrollment of the two countries within "the front of progressive culture", whose purpose was to create a culture purified both from nationalistic and cosmopolitan tendencies.

Besides these cultural conventions, organizations such as Romanian Hungarian Cultural Society (*Asociația Româna Ungaria*) sprang up to help mediate closer cultural relations. Undoubtedly, the improvement was real. But after the Hungarian revolution and especially after 1958 the bilateral relations worsened being compromised both by the closing of Hungarian University Bolyai in Cluj¹⁹, and by the RWP's instrumentalization of the Romanian national feelings. In 1948 similar associations were set up to improve the cultural, scientific, and economic relations with Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The latter organization (ARIUG) had been largely inactive in Romania because of the Tito-Stalin split. Romanian officials closely monitored all its members, and those suspected of pro-Tito stances; some of them were even arrested.

¹⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Propagandă și Agitație, file no. 17/1954, p. 24-25.

¹⁸ Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive*, Princeton, N. J., 1964, p. 44-50.

¹⁹ Elemér Illyés, *National Minorities in Romania: Change in Transylvania*, Boulder-Colorado, 1982.

Yugoslav external propaganda made important efforts to promote its cultural values in postwar Romania, especially during 1945 and the beginning of 1948. Romania had an important Serbian minority living mainly in Banat province and Arad County, near the Yugoslav border. This reality also had consequences for closer cultural contacts and exchanges during the period 1944-1948. Moreover, probably after Stalin, Josip Broz Tito was the most praised foreign leader by the Romanian communist-controlled press between 1945 and 1947. Pro-Yugoslav propaganda grew with the occasion of Tito's visit in Romania in November 1947. The Yugoslav model of Socialism was praiseworthy. The Romanian communists encouraged the publication of materials, articles, and papers, which pleaded for the implementation of the Yugoslav cultural, economical, and political structures. The importance of the relations with Tito is given by the fact that at the Romanian Legation in Belgrade were sent important intellectuals and scholars, such as philosopher Tudor Vianu as ambassador and art and literary critic Ion Frunzetti as cultural attaché. The latter published in the fall of 1947 an article in the communist journal *Romania liberă* titled *The Concept of "Culture" in New Yugoslavia*²⁰, a writing, which soon after its publication became out-of-date. After Stalin brought the ideological charges against Yugoslavia in obedience to Moscow orders the Romanian communist authorities launched an angry campaign against Tito, and as a result the press flew into anti-Titoist rage.

There are also some cultural aspects of the Romanian-Yugoslav dispute due to Soviet instigation. RWP grieved over the suicide cases among pro-Soviet Yugoslav intellectuals. The tensioned relations between Yugoslavia and Romania had a strong effect both over cultural activities and cultural bilateral cooperation; it also caused harm to the Serbian minority in Romania, preeminently to the Cultural Democratic Union of the Slavs (CDUS – *Uniunea Democratică Culturală a Slavilor*). For example, the participation of a Romanian Serbian folk group ensemble in the May Day anniversary festivities in Bucharest aroused doubts among the members of top communist leadership. For example, on April 21, 1949 at the RWP Secretariat gathering, Ana Pauker opposed their participation and she gave voice of her indignation saying: "our people would not understand what those people are doing here [in Bucharest, after our violent campaign against Tito!]." ²¹ In the end, the Secretariat approved their participation but only with strict conditions.

The secret police (the *Securitate*) and the party propaganda officials closely watched every policy shifts of Tito's Yugoslavia, but also the Romanian Serbs' state of mind. A 1949 Agitprop document concerning the allegedly "espionage and hostile propaganda activity" carried on by Yugoslavia mentioned that "at the beginning one noticed much consternation within Serbian minority in Romania, the majority of them saying that do not believe that Tito produced a real political change in

²⁰ "România liberă", V, no. 1011 C, Sunday, November 30, 1947, p. 2.

²¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Cancelarie, file no. 42/1949, p. 12; *Stenogramele ședințelor Biroului Politic și ale Secretariatului Comitetului Central al PMR 1949* (ed. by Camelia Moraru et al.), 2, Bucharest, 2003, p. 245.

Yugoslavia, but it is a Tito new and sly political tactics.”²² The document also ascertained that the Serbian minority was still not ready to understand and assume communist ideology due to a low-level of political knowledge. The material, which reached the RWP Central Committee, pointed out the fact that “Tito’s numerous secret agents came to Romania escaping over the border to fulfill hostile and damaging missions. They got in touch with the leaders of the Cultural Democratic Union of Slavs in order to undermine the ideological work of this Romanian Serbs’ association. Also they organized a network of informants, and espionage agency in Romania with the end of spreading Titoist propaganda materials and to create diversions”. The document quoted the cases of some persons who either were excluded from the CDUS or arrested (Bozhidar Stanoevic, Iotsa Sapunjin). Also, Goritsa Teodorovic, the former director of the Serbian Romanian Publishing House in Timisoara (*The Yugoslav Books*) and her husband feeling uncomfortable and being under police surveillance ran away from Romania and found shelter in Tito’s Yugoslavia. At the end the document mentioned that “twice in a month the diplomatic pouch came to the Yugoslav Legation in Bucharest bringing a bag full of propagandistic brochures, newspapers, and Titoist books which are afterwards sent to various addresses.”²³ Meanwhile, in such context of political tension Romania’s cultural relations with Albania improved: on April 12, 1950 the RWP Secretariat decided to approve the demand of Albanian Communist Party (Party of Labour of Albania) to print on special paper 5,000 copies (2,500 in Russian, and 2,500 in French) the illustrated magazine *New Albania* (Albanie Nouvelle). The newborn Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with the Foreign Countries (IRRCS) had the task of printing them²⁴.

Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with the Foreign Countries

IRRCS imitated the Soviet VOKS (All Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) and did not have any autonomy, each cultural project and invitation of Western intellectuals and scientists had to be approved beforehand by the party leadership.²⁵ In the same way the economy was planned, cultural relations with the foreign countries were also coordinated. For example, the renewal of the so-called annual cultural plans regarding the relations with people’s democracies (countries of the Soviet Bloc) was on the agenda of the RWP gathering on March 31, 1950. At this meeting Ana Pauker noticed that Romania had cultural bilateral agreements with all people’s democracies, but the annual cultural plans are behindhand since no cultural event list with Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria existed yet. The proposal that the task of drawing up such plans to be transfer to each cultural institute failed because some states such as Poland and Bulgaria did not

²² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Cancelarie, file no. 170/1949, p. 20.

²³ Ibidem, p. 20-21.

²⁴ Ibidem, File No. 87/1950, p. 1.

²⁵ Ibidem, File No. 30/1951, p. 2.

create such organizations. In the end, the RWP Secretariat decided to suggest to the other countries the formation of similar institutes invested with the task of drawing up such annual cultural plans. Until this moment these plans were to be renewed by an *ad hoc* governmental commission.

The IRRCS was a political tool of Romania's cold war cultural diplomacy. It activated under the aegis of the External Affairs Section of the RWP's Central Committee led by Ghizela Vass, whose political longevity is well known. Until 1960, IRRCS had to strictly follow the RWP's foreign policy, which was in fact in agreement with the Soviet diplomacy's interests. That is the avoiding of any cultural event or action, which could give the impression that the Romanian foreign policy defies in any way the Kremlin. For example, Ghizela Vass, the Romanian head of Foreign Affairs Department initially allowed Romanian participation in the International sculpture exhibit held in Arnhem (Holland) because other communist delegations – most notably those from Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the USSR – would also participate. However, in May 1952, just one month before the exhibition would take place, Vass pulled out the Romanian delegation after all other delegations, except that of Poland, had also pulled out. This despite the fact Jan Willem Havermans, a progressive sculptor appreciated by the Communist Party of Holland, took part in the exhibition.

Nevertheless, the Romanian institutions officially encouraged the intense cultural contacts with Western “progressive”, communist-oriented intellectuals. Among the media monitoring documents of the Agitprop there is a translation from *Oesterreichische Zeitung*, an article entitled *Swedish seeing Romania*. In 1952 a Scandinavian delegation composed of scholars visited Romania for three weeks. The Swedish group of political pilgrims included two members of the Swedish Communist Party, two Social Democrats, and three without any political affiliation. After this visit the newspaper *Ny Dag* asked three members of the delegation what they saw in Romania. Engineer Gustav Nilsson (Stockholm) declared: “I did not see something which could give me the impression that over there [in Romania] one put pressure on somebody or exert terror.” Yet, according to some estimates, police terror in the form of arrests for political and ideological reasons in communist Romania reached the highest level in 1952²⁶. Seemingly, these 1952 figures were not surpassed until 1989.

The Jewish Minority, Israeli Mass Media, and Communist Counterpropaganda

Communist ideological offensive in Romania affected also the Romanian Jewish cultural and religious institutions particularly after 1947. By the beginning of 1954, Israeli mass media was criticizing the Romanian government for the violation of both national minorities' rights and religious freedom. As a result, the Romanian

²⁶ See *Anii 1949-1953: mecanisme terorii* (ed. by Romulus Rusan), Bucharest, 1999.

Communists propaganda machinery promptly reacted upon²⁷. It is important to follow the entire decision making process with regard to the Romanian response to this Israeli mass media challenge. In order to counteract to the so-called "Israeli Zionist reactionary circles" Leonte Răutu suggested that the RWP Secretariat should approve a plan with the necessary measures. Ghizela Vass, Leonte Răutu, and Simion Bughici (the minister of Foreign Affairs) adopted these proposals during a communist party gathering²⁸. Afterwards, Leonte Răutu, Ghizela Vass, and S. Bughici met the communist press representatives, radio broadcasters, and national press agency (AGERPRES) in order to establish their particular tasks of counter-propaganda. Later on, Răutu drew up the document containing the following proposals: Romanian Broadcasting stations must start transmitting radio programmes in Yiddish language (and at least some in English, French, and German), and a commentary by the writer Isac Ludo entitled "What are the real goals of the propaganda carried on by the Zionist chiefs"; newspapers must continue to publish letters from Romanian citizens of Jewish origins who left from Israel and returned home to Romania; obviously, the letters had to praise the communist achievements and to emphasize the economic hardships facing Israel; the plan of ideological retaliation also included the publication of brochures focusing on the situation of national minorities in communist Romania, their rights, cultural institutions, including the Jewish theaters and schools. The propagandistic materials encompassed also pictures with synagogues, rabbis, Jewish Romanian *stakhanovites* (model workers), and scholars, illustrating both the freedom of religion and the complete integration of the Jewish minority in new communist Romania. This information had to be widespread by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and National Press Agency, and published also in Western and Israeli large circulation newspapers. A group of rabbis headed by chief rabbi Moses Rosen had to write a letter addressed to all Jewish communities regarding the so-called campaign of calumnies launched in Israel against Romania. Some members of the Secretariat made objections especially regarding the proposal to transmit data concerning both Israelis' role as a tool (as a "pawn") of American imperialism and the bad situation of Israel's economy. Probably, even Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the secretary general of RWP, raised objections. One annotation probably written by Gheorghiu-Dej himself (he jot something down) on Răutu's document underlined the questionable proposals and asked: *Is it really necessary to engage in official polemics?*²⁹

Eventually, the top party leadership decided to allocate the most parts in this counterpropaganda play to the representatives of the Romanian Jewish minority. Consequently, Răutu, Vass and the other representatives of the communist propaganda softened the tone of what could be seen as official condemnation of Israel. Anyway, probably the fact that the three of them (Leonte Răutu, Ghizela Vass, and Simion Bughici) were of Jewish origins was the best alibi for RWP leadership facing predictable accusation of anti-Semitism.

²⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Propagandă și Agitație, file no. 4/1954, p. 156.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 157.

²⁹ Ibidem.

Communist Attitude toward Religious Symbols

It is important to focus also on the treatment of religious and especially Christian symbols in Romanian Cold War press either spread in the country or abroad. An ideological inquiry of the Agitprop from 1949 revealed the actions of an allegedly hostile group formed by young Bessarabian Romanian writers, which acted like a mystical sect. Bessarabia (more or less the today Republic of Moldova) was a former Romanian province, which became Soviet Socialist Republic after August 1944. (The Bessarabia's refugees were sort of *pariah*. Even the usage of the word *Bessarabia* was taboo.) On the occasion of May Day 1949 Vornic Basarabeanu (young writer of Bessarabian origins, as his name suggested) published in a prominent literary journal a poem apparently praising the Workers' Anniversary. In fact the stanzas included an acrostic, a poem in which the first letters in each line formed a few subversive words: *Christ has resurrected!* He was punished and could not publish anymore³⁰. The case of Mihai Șora is somehow different. At the beginning of 1950s French Romanian philosopher Mihai Șora was transferred to IRRCS as editor of *Today's Romania*, an illustrated monthly magazine for propaganda abroad, which appeared in English and French. It had to give an impression of free cultural press³¹. In fact, by its content, the journal probably had sent an ambiguous message to the foreign readers. But it is true that the ideology and politicization did not leave such an important mark upon it at least in comparison with the rest of the Romanian press. Probably it was the single Romanian periodical during an era of official atheism, which could publish images with churches and priests. Actually, Șora was fired from job because of religious political matter. At the beginning of 1950s the magazine's contents included a feature report on Sibiu's architectural treasures. Sibiu (or, in German, Hermannstadt) was an important city of Transylvania founded by German settlers at the end of the 12th century. Cold War Romanian propaganda has exploited its numerous medieval buildings, castles, and churches in order to send abroad the image of a communist country, which preserves both the cultural heritage and the German minority rights. Also, the friendship and collaboration between Romanians and Germans must be stressed. So, for this reason all architectural elements had to be placed in a good light. The picture of city's Christian Orthodox cathedral was not a fore front photography. Consequently, after the photomontage the picture represented the Church without its towers. Mihai Șora was accused of sabotage; allegedly he tried to suggest abroad that in Romania the communist authorities infringed on religious rights and persecuted the Christian Churches. Mihai Șora was dismissed.

³⁰ Ibidem, File No. 91/1949, p. 1-2; see also Cristian Vasile, *Literatura realismului socialist. Scriitorii români și povara ideologică (1948-1953)*, "Studii și Materiale de Istorie Contemporană", 7 (2008), p. 110.

³¹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Cristian Vasile, *Perfectul acrobat. Leonte Răutu, măștile răului*, Bucharest, 2008, p. 135.

1956 National Theater Tour in Paris

After Stalin's death in the context of the cultural "thaw" the intellectual life seemed dominated by the so called Spirit of Geneva; during this period of relaxation Romania joined the United Nations (in 1955) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; July 27, 1956). After evident cases of cooperation during the Cold War such as the Geneva conferences of 1953 and 1954, and the Austrian State Treaty of 1955³², the Romanian authorities were somehow forced to adopt addresses towards Western world preeminently attractive rather than threatening; it allowed the idea of concession and compromise between East and West. The policy makers' were compelled to temporarily abandon their minds, which were shaped by a dichotomic view and to conceive a new cultural strategy towards the West.

Nevertheless, the capitalist countries and the Romanian political refugees in the West remained *the enemies*. After the Soviet model, in 1955 the RWP communist leadership founded both the Romanian Committee for Repatriation (headed by the communist worker Constantin Agiu) and the newspaper *Glasul Patriei* (*The Voice of the Motherland*, a Romanian imitation of the Soviet journal *Golos Rodina*, distributed among Russians living abroad). Its first issue came out in December 1955; the main goal of the two bodies was to influence and manipulate the Romanian emigration³³. Its headquarters was in Pankow (East Berlin, GDR) that is on the front line of the Cold War.

However, as one said the Romanian communists have had to rethink their (cultural) policies concerning the Western Europe and to consider a soft cultural openness³⁴. The cultural strategists were aware of the cardinal importance of the normalization of cultural relations with France. Probably a clarification in the policies of External Relations Section / Agitprop occurred at the beginning of 1956 while accepting on behalf of the National Theater in Bucharest the invitation to join the French Festival of Drama (also as a hope in the possibilities of negotiation with France and with some representatives of the Romanian émigrés in France). In the summer of 1956 took place an event, which had many implications. For the first time after two decades the Romanian National Theater accomplished a tour in Paris. Two plays were presented: *A Lost Letter* (author I. L. Caragiale), directed by Sică Alexandrescu, and *The Last Hour* (author Mihail Sebastian), directed by Moni Ghelerter. In fact, the two directors cast the most prominent actors and actresses of the Romanian drama in the 1950s such as: Marietta Sadova, Ion Manolescu, Maria Filotti, Radu Beligan, who had also important artistic connections, peers or relatives in French capital. The communist power attached at least two important ideological

³² Victor A. Kremenyuk, *The Cold War as cooperation: A Soviet Perspective*, in *The Cold War as cooperation* (ed. by Roger E. Kanet and Edward A. Kolodziej), Baltimore, 1991, p. 31.

³³ Nicolae Merișanu, Adrian Majuru, *Glasul Patriei comuniste și defăimarea exilului*, in *Puterea comunistă și exilul, în oglindă (texte polemice)*, Bucharest, [2007], p. 23.

³⁴ For the Soviet case of cultural relaxation, see Fr. C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive* cit.

supervisors of the delegation; the first ideological supervisor was Paul Cornea, head of the General Direction of Theaters within the Ministry of Culture; the second was Pavel Câmpeanu, instructor and later head of sector within External Affairs Department of the Central Committee, and subordinate of the “eternal comrade” Ghizela Vass³⁵. In the 1950s he was also in charge with the RWP’s relations with both Cominformist Yugoslav refugees in Romania and the leadership of Greek Communist Party (KKE) sheltered in Bucharest. Probably Pavel Câmpeanu is better known as Felipe Garcia Casals because in the 1980s he published under this pseudonym an interesting book, *The Syncretic Society*, with a foreword by Alfred G. Mayer³⁶, which was the work of a neo-Marxist and dissident sociologist in contrast with 1950s apparatchik³⁷. Pavel Câmpeanu played the most important part in this ideological choreography of the Paris Tour. On July 23, 1956 at the end of the journey Pavel Câmpeanu drew up a document: “information concerning some problems with regard to the Romanian National Theater tour in Paris (June-July 1956)”³⁸, which proved that he watched directly the 1950s strategies of control, infiltration and instrumentalization of the Romanian exile community. “Our ideological bodies – Pavel Câmpeanu noted – which are responsible for the supervision of the Romanian emigration have to analyze if it is somehow useful to publish in *Glasul Patriei* an article or a personal letter of an actor or actress who was in Paris [describing the success of the French Tour].”³⁹ Obviously, *personal* did not mean *spontaneous* or *freely*. P. Câmpeanu suggested also that some important actors could be asked to maintain the correspondence with their Paris friends and peers (French or French Romanians), in order to obtain valuable information for the Agitprop and External Affairs Department. “[Ion] Manolescu, [Maria] Filotti, [Marietta] Sadova could receive the suggestion to continue the private correspondence with their friends from France”⁴⁰. Marietta Sadova was a former activist of the Legionary Movement and an old friend of three famous Romanian émigrés (E. M. Cioran, the well-known French Romanian philosopher; Eugène Ionesco, and Mircea Eliade). But the privileged and instrumental actors soon became victims. In the early 1960 Marietta Sadova was arrested and sentenced to eight years jail for maintaining links with enemies from outside in order to plan a conspiracy against the social order of communist Romania⁴¹. She was accused that during the 1956 Tour in Paris received subversive (jingoistic and nationalistic) books, written

³⁵ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Cristian Vasile, *PCR și exilul anticomunist: un document revelator*, <http://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2009/04/05/pcr-si-exilul-anticomunist-un-document-revelator/> [April 23, 2009].

³⁶ Felipe Garcia Casals [Pavel Câmpeanu], *The Syncretic Society* (transl. from the French by Guy Daniels), White Plains, N.Y., 1980. Romanian edition: *Societatea sincretică* (transl. by Nadia Badrus, Jassy, 2002).

³⁷ See also Pavel Câmpeanu, *The Origins of Stalinism: from Leninist Revolution to Stalinist society* (transl. by Michael Vale), Armonk, N.Y., 1986.

³⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Propagandă și Agitație, file no. 64/1956, p. 1-8.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ *Prigoana. Documente ale procesului C. Noica, N. Steinhardt, Al. Paleologu, A. Acterian, S. Al. George, Al. O. Teodoreanu etc.* (ed. by Mihai Giurgariu et al.), Bucharest, 1996, p. 436-516.

by E. M. Cioran and M. Eliade, works that were brought in Romania and spread among Marietta Sadova's circle of acquaintances (one of them was philosopher Constantin Noica⁴², former sympathizer of the Interwar Legionary Movement).

According to Pavel Câmpeanu's estimates the tour was a multilateral success and an extraordinary triumph bringing growing prestige to Romania; allegedly even émigrés' hearts were throbbing with joy during the representation of the two National Theater's plays. Besides these possible exaggerations, indeed this cultural trip fostered the cultural ties with France, with some French government bodies, and probably improved the image of communist Romania in the eyes of some segments of French public opinion. Definitely, until 1956 Romania and France were two countries alienated one from each other by great ideological differences. 1956 was an effort to surpass this burden of the past. But Romanian cultural diplomacy's list of difficulties regarding French problem was long; there were many obstructions put in the way of the Agitprop/Foreign Affairs Section cultural strategists by French Romanians.

A number of French Romanian émigrés, however, showed a sort of availability toward cultural cooperation with the Romanian government (famous actress Elvira Popesco, for example), but for these Romanians the disillusionments came quickly they understood that they were used by Bucharest as a counterweight against anticommunist exile. It is true that after November 1956 Hungarian uprising and especially after 1958 the will of the Romanian communist leadership to negotiate cautiously with the Diaspora's prominent cultural representatives decreased. Moreover, the attitude toward exile community became more and more angry even fly into rage. Or, so it seems, since the communist power through the agency of the secret police resorted even to the kidnapping of some Romanians including historian and former diplomat in Turkey Aurel Decei. He published many works dedicated to Oriental studies and after 1948 refused to return to Romania. Probably in 1957 the Romanian espionage laid him a trap while he was in West Berlin. Decei was took by force and transferred in East Berlin and then in Romania when he was sentenced to death penalty⁴³.

A Blackmail Case: Vintilă Horia, 1960

Another case of large scale offensive against Romanian émigrés occurred in 1960 when French Romanian writer Vintilă Horia won the Goncourt Prize, the most prestigious French literary award. During the 1930s Horia published articles in extreme-right wing publications⁴⁴. In the early 1940s joined Romanian diplomatic service and, like Aurel Decei, refused to come back. He was sentenced to life in prison during a 1946 show trial in which he was not present to answer the charges

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ Ioan Opreș, *Aurel Decei sau destinul disperării*, Bucharest, 2004.

⁴⁴ Richard Wagner, *A Writer in the Cold War*, "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", April 2, 2007; <http://www.signandsight.com/features/1318.html> [February 23, 2009].

regarding his contribution to the spreading of fascist ideas. Unlike other pro-Legionary Movement intellectuals such as Mircea Eliade and E. M. Cioran, Vintilă Horia criticized harshly and ceaselessly the Stalinist regime until 1960. No wonder that when the Goncourt Prize jury selected Horia's novel *God was born in exile* as winner in 1960 the communist authorities tried to blackmail the unrestrained and disobedient writer⁴⁵. They demanded him positive comments on communist achievements in return for not revealing to French press his youthful pro-fascist publications and 1946 documents of the trial. After his refusal, the French communist newspaper *L'Humanité* published the compromising information regarding Vintilă Horia's past. The writer was forced to relinquish the Goncourt Prize and leave France⁴⁶. We do not know every detail of this blackmail affair, but probably it involved Agitprop, External Affairs Department, Romanian espionage, and Romanian ambassador in Paris, Constantin Nicuță, former fellow of the Romanian School in France. Probably, Vintilă Horia case was the last aggressive, Stalinist-type action against the Romanian "diaspora". After 1962-1963 when RWP leadership tried to unburden the Soviet Union guardianship and establish "normal" cultural relations with the West such actions were not so desirable.

* * *

The morbid fear of alien ideas and their bearers, a Soviet-type obsession⁴⁷, hindered after 1956 the emergence of a Romanian intellectual reform movement somehow similar with the Czechoslovak group of writers, philosophers, and scientists who prepared the Prague Spring. Unlike Czech and Slovak intellectuals, their Romanian peers did not draw up and did not pursue the path of an anti-Stalinist critique with elements of alternative political conceptualization. It is true that they did not find any support within the top party leadership. The radical anti-intellectual repression wave at the end of the 1950s, and the internal disputes within Creative Unions, Universities, and the Academy, fed up by the regime, all these were crucial factors that favored both the instrumentalization of national feelings, an anti-Hungarian stand – after 1958 – instead of interethnic intellectual cooperation toward reform. Especially in the 1960s Romanian intellectuals became prisoners of such cultural and national policies as well as some of their peers abroad – Romanian writers with pro-fascist past – who were prisoners of their own biographies. Although the Romanian communists did not have the Soviet huge resources and tools of foreign cultural policy, due also to these biographical vulnerabilities it threatened to gain control of the Romanian exile community in order to struggle against critical reporting on communist Romania abroad.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ For details, see Ovidiu Bozgan, *Diplomația culturală românească: promovare, recuperare, compromitere. Cazul franco-român 1955-1960*, "Analele Universității din București. Istorie", 48 (1999).

⁴⁷ Fr. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive* cit., p. 74-79.

After 1958-59 Hungary tried to use the Soviet ideological and diplomatic channel that is the Kremlin's mediation to influence the improvement of the cultural rights of Romanian Hungarians, but the RWP leadership refused to take Hungarian and Soviets' advices⁴⁸. The Romanian communist officials suspected that the increasing cultural cooperation (book exchanges, educational collaboration etc.) would favor the spreading of both Marxist revisionist and nationalistic tendencies among Transylvanian Hungarians. The 1959 unification of Cluj universities was motivated by the need to correct the "concessions" that allegedly favored after 1945 the Hungarian minority and allowed its actions of solidarity with 1956 Hungarian revolution. From the Romanian communists' point of view the national question was solved in 1960. Therefore, the period 1956-1960 could be seen also as the transition from the pro-Soviet and internationalist stand to a "Romanianization" of communism with nationalistic aspects.

⁴⁸ *Situația minorităților naționale. Maghiarii*, in *Raport final* (ed. by Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrințu, and Cristian Vasile), Bucharest, 2007, p. 344-345.