

Octav Gabriel NEGREA*

ROMANIAN PHILATELY – AN INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA IN ROMANIA: THE ARLUS CASE (1945-1955)

– Abstract –

This article intends to call the attention of specialists, and not only of them, on the most significant propaganda postage stamp issues during the early days of the communist regime in Romania. Those issues that were dedicated to the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Soviet Union Ties (A.R.L.U.S.). Throughout its 20-year presence and propaganda activity, the association put several postage stamp issues in circulation. According to acknowledged stamp collectors, only 8 of these postage stamp issues were dedicated explicitly to A.R.L.U.S. (1945-1948 issues, 1950-1952 and 1955 issues), while the rest of the postage stamps in circulation until 1964 (when the association was dissolved) were dedicated to the Romanian – Soviet Friendship Month. Comprising of a series of symbols and graphics with a direct appeal to the communist ideology, the A.R.L.U.S. postage stamps were a significant part of the propaganda mechanism employed by the communist regime.

Keywords: A.R.L.U.S.; postage stamp; postmark; propaganda; communism; Soviet Union.

The first signs of communist propaganda, following the coup on August 23rd, will work their way through Romanian philately as early as 1945, on the occasion of the association's first congress, when the first

* Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Arheologie Prahova- Ploiești (octav.negrea@gmail.com).

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postage stamp issue dedicated to A.R.L.U.S. is published (the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Soviet Union Ties, established November, 1944). Initiated one October evening in 1944, at Constantin I. Parhon's residence and under his direct authority, "the fruit of an intellectual initiative"¹, brought to life on November 12, 1944 (**Addenda, Plate 1, picture 1**), establishing the association will gradually become, until its dissolution in 1964, instrumental for the interests and the communist propaganda in Romania, through the actions it carried out, the events organized and run by its members (**Addenda, Plate 1, pictures 2-3**) in clubs throughout the country, through Russian-taught schools in various locations, through articles published in "Veac Nou" ("New Century") magazine and, especially, through the *Russian Book* publishing house and bookstore. As to the *Russian Book* publishing house and bookstore, besides referrals to Faust and Aladdin, what stands out are the words in a poem entitled "Upon inauguration of *Russian Book* bookstore", authored by a certain A. Toma and published in "Veac Nou" magazine. The lyrics reflect the soviet inspired "new poetry" trend:

"...Lightly, I lay my hand on one – suddenly, I am enraptured in flight - / I see enchanted countries: my book is the enchanted carpet! / Wonders all around – but in my eyes I more thirstily taste them / From the Republic of great justice with brethren soviets. /

*There, another book I pick up: I have touched Aladdin's lamp! / Thou command! Two Genii say alive from a plate / I ask thou for the world of tomorrow, where happiness is bliss. / Within us - Lenin and Stalin. Come lend a hand – and it is possible in this. /..."*²

Although the 20 founding members of the association (doctors, high-ranking military officials, lawyers, professors etc.) amongst them, together with C.I. Parhon: Ștefan Milcu, Grigore T. Popa, col. Mihai Maltopol and col. Egizio Massini, Petre Viforeanu, Constantin Titel

¹Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx- O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc* (*On Marx's shoulders. An introduction to the history of Romanian communism*): <https://ro.scribd.com/read/395016855/Pe-umerii-lui-Marx-O-introducere-in-istoria-comunismului-romanesc>; (November 2021).

² [http://arhiva.romanialiterara.com/index.pl/literatur_i_propagand_editura_cartea_rus](http://arhiva.romanialiterara.com/index.pl/literatur_i_propagand_editura_cartea_rus;); (October 2021).

Petrescu, et.al., were stating its purpose as “*mutual knowledge and promoting friendship ties between Romania and the country of soviets*”³, this “knowledge”, granted the founding members did not “*know the reality in the soviet world*”, was in fact about the social and political reality in Romania falling into the “*friendship*” line adapted to the needs and interests of the big brother from the east.

To the rhythm of the 1812 Overture (The Solemn Overture) of Piotr Ilici Tchaikovsky⁴ and after 133 years since the annexation of Bessarabia, from May 20th through the 27th, 1945, there followed the works of the first congress and the first national A.R.L.U.S. conference, an opportunity not to be missed for the propaganda to publish a new postage stamp issue dedicated to this prominent event (the movie *ARLUS - A year in retrospect*⁵ also premiered on this occasion). Therefore, on May 4th, 1945, the “Official Journal”, part I, issue no. 102 announces, undersigned by Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Under Secretary of State (May 2nd, 1945), the decision (following reports no. 110 674 of April 26th, 1945 and no. 105 484 of April 28th and May 2nd, 1945 from the General Direction of Postal, Telegraph, Telephone Service – PTT) to authorize a new issue made up of 4 postage stamps and one sheet-block “*in (as the decision reads) support of the First General Congress of the A.R.L.U.S. Association*”⁶ (see **Addenda, Plate 2, picture 4-5**). The same decision mentions the 4 colours (olive, red, blue and brown – face value ascending) as well as the values of the 4 postage stamps (20 Lei face value, additional value of 80 Lei, 35 Lei face value,

³Cioroianu, *op.cit.*: <https://ro.scribd.com/read/395016855/Pe-umerii-lui-Marx-O-introducere-in-istoria-comunismului-romanesc>; (November 2021).

⁴ Ion Gaidău, 75 de ani de la cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial. România, sub asaltul lui Stalin: “Mi-a raportat că totul este în ruină și maximă mizerie”: https://adevarul.ro/cultura/istorie/75-ani-de-al-doilea-razboi-mondialromania-asaltul-stalin-mi-a-raportat-totul-ruina-maxima-mizerie-1_5eb56b1c5163ec427193d271/index.html; (November 2021).

⁵ Codruț Constantinescu, “File din activitatea ARLUS în Prahova” (“Pages in ARLUS activity in Prahova”): <https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/la-fata-locului/file-din-activitatea-arlus-in-prahova-634099.html>; (February 2022).

⁶<http://www.digibuc.ro/proxy/?px=aHR0cDovL2RpZ2l0b29sLmJpYm1ldC5ybzo4ODgxL1IvVVhKNjRKTUFROUw5NUQ1OUplLkksySTVQTERGTTE2SU1IQzc0STc1UDY1WUJZOTVRUTItMDA0NTY/ZnVuYz1yZXN1bHRzLWp1bXA7c2V0X2VudHJ5PTAwMDAwMvYzhbXA7c2V0X251bWJlcj0wMDg1NjUmYW1wO2Jhc2U9R0VOMDE=>; (August 2021).

additional value of 165 Lei, 75 Lei face value, additional value of 225 Lei and 80 Lei face value with an additional value of 420 Lei. The sheet-block series, in red, was to be made up of the 2 postmarks corresponding to a 35 Lei face value and an additional value of 165 Lei, 75 Lei face value and an additional value of 225 Lei, respectively. With a size of 42/26 mm, the postage stamps were to be heliography printed, on white XIV filigree paper (King Michael's monogram), in monochrome with a 14 - 14:14^{1/2} and a 13^{1/2} · 7 lace-like perforation. The graphic issue models were conceived by graphic artists Iosif Cova and Iosif Molnar, thus placing them on the "front lines" of artists "that, early on, out of the new ways of understanding the meaning of art, shaped a new means to fight and create" which made them "the pioneers of remakings that were being called for in order for art to draw on the large masses of the people..."⁸.

In terms of graphics, both postage stamps and A.R.L.U.S. congress sheet-blocks can easily be categorized as dissemination of propaganda. Given the moment when they occurred, the year 1945, they have yet to be infused by the socialist realism in soviet art, *which is difficult to be interpreted without the communist politics mechanisms*,⁹ due to a lack of key drivers and centralized institutions characteristic to the communist regime. The olive first postage stamp of the issue, with a face value of 20 Lei + 80 Lei (additional value) shows two books, the covers of which display the Kingdom of Romania coat of arms and the the symbols of the Moscow communist power. The two books together speak to the role and the purpose of the association, to promote mutual knowledge between the two countries as well as ties between the Kingdom of Romania and "The Great Country of the Soviets", but they also speak to the role intellectuals should play in strengthening ties between the two countries – as they are, in fact, the main vectors for mutual knowledge. The graphic elements are

⁷ Kiriac Dragomir, Aurel Surpățeanu, *Catalogul mărcilor poștale românești '74 (1974 Romanian postmark catalogue)*, Casa Scînteii, Bucharest, 1974, p. 222.

⁸ Acad. G. Oprescu, *Artele plastice în România după 23 August 1944 (Fine arts in Romania following August 23, 1944)*, Romanian People's Republic Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1959, p. 11.

⁹ Irina Cărăbaș, *Realismul socialist cu fața spre trecut. Instituții și artiști în România: 1944- 1953 (Social realism facing the past. Institutions and artists in Romania: 1944-1953)*, Ideea Design & Print Publishing House, Cluj, 2017, p. 17.

accompanied, on each side, by the lines: “The First General Congress May 20th, 1945” (the date can be read in the upper side corner of the postage stamp, facing inward) – the upper side of the strip; “ARLUS Romania 20 Lei+80 Lei Postage” – lower side of the strip. The Romanian Athenaeum and the Bolshoi Theatre buildings are clearly shown in the background on the second red postage stamp, speaking to the same message as the first stamp: a strengthening of the ties and mutual knowledge between the two countries through culture, through education. Two imposing flags fly high above the two culturally representative buildings: the flag of the Kingdom of Romania and the Soviet Union flag. The text is identical and has the same font, with little difference when it comes to placing “ARLUS”, up close and in the middle of the postage stamp, as well as the date, in the upper right corner (stamp facing inward). The face value of this postage stamp was set at 35 Lei + 165 Lei (additional value). In order to emphasize the idea of strengthening ties between the two peoples and, especially, in order to underline and recognise this aim through historical facts references, the fourth postage stamp of the issue, in a brown colour and a with a face value of 80 Lei + 420 Lei (added value) shows Tudor Vladimirescu (1780-1821) and Aleksandr Nevski (1221-1263). At first glance, to those that are less acquainted with historical science, joining these two heroes together (a 13th century hero next to an early 19th century one) may seem, at the very least, bizarre. In fact, beyond just being acquainted to and understanding the two historical time periods, from a propaganda standpoint, the message is as simple as possible, and this connection is no accident. Even though the two historic figures stand 500 years apart, both are perceived as fighters to protect the rights of the poor and oppressed, figures that fought invaders and oppressors, that protected their land and people. Whether or not Iosif Molnar and Iosif Cova simply followed orders or had complete freedom in choosing these two historical figures for the postage stamps (a lack of historic sources with this respect prevents us from knowing so), and beyond propaganda that speaks to the protectors of “*the freedom of the masses and the oppressed*”, a rhetorical question is naturally raised: how many knew about Aleksandr Nevski and

who he was, out of the many looking at this stamp, given the level of education of Romanians at the time?

The third postage stamp of the series, the last to be presented, was created in blue and with a face value of 75 Lei + an additional value of 225 Lei. From a graphic standpoint, it is exclusively dedicated to Moscow and the power of the soviets. Behind a row of flag carrying (suggested) silhouettes and facing a glittering sun that sends its powerful rays to benefit everyone, one can easily recognize the Spasskaya tower in the background, one of Kremlin's towers (the three-tier Spasski tower, with its tented roof).¹⁰ The most intriguing aspect about this postage stamp is, however, the picture of the hand (slightly skeletal?) that pulls the curtain apart, to show the above-mentioned scene suggesting that, indeed, "the light comes from the East"¹¹, to quote Mihail Sadoveanu¹², one of the "apostles" of the new social order (who turned to the new order on grounds of opportunity) during a conference he held at Sala Dalles hall of events in Bucharest.

As regards text on postage stamps three and four (in order of face value, and not of description herein), compared to the other two postage stamps in the issue, the only differences occur upon placing the ARLUS acronym and the congress date, May 20th, 1945. Consequently, on the blue postage stamp, the third of the series, the association's acronym and the date are placed in the upper right corner, while the fourth brown postage stamp shows the same information in the upper left corner. Lastly, the sheet-block that comprises the issue was heliography printed, on white XIV filigree (King Michael's monogram), in red monochromatic colour, no gum and no lace, made of postage stamps 2 and 3 of the series (no. 918 and no. 919 – as per the Romanian postmark catalogue)¹³.

The following year, 1946, on July 22nd, in order to celebrate the Romanian-Soviet Friendship Day on October 20th, undersigned by the

¹⁰ "The Kazan Spassky Tower. Kremlin's Spasskaya Tower in Kazan: pictures, description": <https://ro.public-welfare.com/4090926-spaskaya-tower-of-kazan-spaskaya-tower-of-the-kazan-kremlin-photos-description>; (November, 2021).

¹¹ Dan D. Iacob, "Lumina vine de la răsărit": <http://dandiacob.ro/2015/12/14/lumina-vine-de-la-rasarit/>; (October 2021).

¹² Stelian Tănase, "Sadoveanu la vremea lui": <https://www.stelian-tanase.ro/sadoveanu-la-vremea-lui/>; (October 2021).

¹³ Dragomir & Surpăţeanu, *op.cit.*, p. 222.

same Ion Gheorghe Maurer, the “Official Journal” (part I), issue no. 167 (pp. 7696-7697), publishes decision no. 24 388¹⁴ in view of authorizing the General Direction of Postal, Telegraph, Telephone Service – PTT to circulate a new postage stamp issue “*to benefit the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Soviet Union Ties*” (**Addenda, Plate 3, pictures 6, 7**). Based on this decision, on October 20th, 1946, on the occasion of celebrating the Romanian-Soviet friendship (a year since, at C.I. Parhon’s residence, the foundation of the Romanian-Soviet friendship association was decided upon) a 5-postmark postage stamp issue was put in circulation (four face values) (**Addenda, Plate 3, picture 8**). Printed in heliography, on white and gray XIV filigree paper, the graphic design of postage stamps making up the issue were authored by graphic artist Oswald Adler. It should be noted that four out of the five postage stamps show a type A lace (13^{1/2})¹⁵ following perforation. Compared to the 1945 issue, besides face value and colour, the Official Journal decision mentions, unlike the first time, the size and printing numbers for each postage stamp to be issued, as well.

As such, for the 80 Lei postage stamp in brown, the graphic element decided upon was the bust of ruler Dimitrie Cantemir. It is noteworthy that, for this postage stamp, (93x116 mm in size) an initial face value of 40 Lei was considered and, as graphic element, only the picture of the ruler¹⁶. This context must have been triggered by preliminary debates between politicians in charge, at first, and then, between politicians and designers that were to create the graphics of postage stamps. Whether or not these debates took place or if there were any other talks with regards to ways of creating the graphics of postage stamps, besides decisions published in the “Official Journal”, no historical sources have been found, unfortunately, to this day, to confirm this hypothesis. Postage stamps two

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¹⁵ Dragomir & Surpăteanu, *op.cit.*, p. 231.

¹⁶ Engr. Călin Marinescu, “Additional information on ARLUS postage stamp issues in 1946”, pp. 13-14: <http://philatelica.ro/philatelica52-19.pdf> (October 2021).

and three of the issue, with a face value of 100 and 300 Lei, respectively, printed in blue and ardesia grey, display a graphic allegory composition indicative to the cultural and economical ties between the two countries. Therefore, the 100 Lei postage stamp shows one book, a theatre mask and a string musical instrument (most likely a guitar, a balalaika or a mandolin) with two tied scarves (a symbol of slavic peoples) on its neck. The graphics are shown on a blue medallion and around the graphic elements, the text reads “*U.S.S.R.-Romania Cultural Ties*”. The 300 Lei ardesia grey postage stamp symbolically displays natural riches and industrial development landmarks of the two countries. The medallion reads: “*U.S.S.R.-Romania Economical Ties*”.

ARLUS issue postage stamps four and five, both red, are identical from a graphics standpoint, showing a white dove in flight, holding an olive branch, a symbol of “*peace and friendship*” in Russian iconography. The text on the medallion reads “*Long live the Romanian-Soviet friendship*” and represents, at the same time, the *desideratum* of the association founded in 1944. From a face value standpoint, even though the two postage stamps share the same value as the third postmark of the issue (300 Lei), they have a higher added value, which amounts to 1,200 Lei. Another noteworthy aspect is that the fifth postage stamp of the issue is the only one imperforated. For this postage stamp issue, the run printing, as per the decision, was set for 750 000 stamps in sheets of 100 perforated stamps for the first three postage stamps of the issue, and 300 000 stamps, both perforated and imperforated, for stamps four and five of the issue.

On September 26th, 1946, an addendum to the July decision (no. 24388) was published in the “Official Journal” (part I), no. 223 (p.10 478)¹⁷, issued on September 19th, 1946, numbered as 30 760 (31 760?) and undersigned by Teohari Georgescu. The decision detailed on the issuance of a 28/33 mm sheet to be added to the 5-stamp issue (with 4 face values), heliography printed on white filigree paper (although the decision does not explicitly mention the type of paper to be used, considering the time of the

¹⁷[http://digitool.bibmet.ro:8881/R/5FIKB7NTKA7MYHT9RIB8PT9VV2AQM6HHNXD6UX7FYQ49MT59MI-03994?func=results-jump-full&set_entry=000012&set_number=001727&base=GEN01](http://digitool.bibmet.ro:8881/R/5FIKB7NTKA7MYHT9RIB8PT9VV2AQM6HHNXD6UX7FYQ49MT59MI-03994?func=results-jump-full&set_entry=000012&set_number=001727&base=GEN01;); (August 2021).

stamp issue, the safety filigree they used at the time was the XIV type (King Michael's monogram), with the same type A (13^{1/2}) lace, with a face value of 1,000 Lei and a selling price of 6,000 Lei (**Addenda, Plate 4, pictures 9-10**). As per the same decision, besides the text that reads "*On Romanian-Soviet Friendship Day, 1946*", the sheet-block would be identical from a graphics standpoint to the fourth value of the stamp issue and would be printed in 62 000 copies. The September 1946 decision also mentioned a 90-day timeframe for franking, for the three face values of the issue, and 115 days for the fourth value of the issue and its sheet. As to this stamp issue, a final ministry decision, supplementary to those in July and September and issued on October 14th, 1946 was published on October 16th, 1946 in the Official Journal no. 240 (page 11 126). As such, decision no. 34 648 specified ways in which the stamp issue was to be disseminated and sold to the population.

With regards to year 1947, for reasons pertaining, most likely, to the economy in Romania at the time, the issue dedicated to the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Soviet Union Ties was restricted to the "*issue*" of a single postmark, on October 30th, 1947. In fact, for this stamp issue they used the graphic design of a stamp in a series dedicated to King Michael (the *King and his Country* issue) and comprised of 11 postmarks (designer Ary Murnu). Printed in heliography, on white XIV filigree paper, in ultramarine and with a 42x26 mm size, the imperforated stamp shows King Michael's bust (in medallion) looking leftward towards Curtea de Argeş Monastery, the Royal House of Romania necropolis. Next to the text that reads "ROMANIA", on the upper side, the stamp shows the royal crown of Romania; the lower side of the stamp shows the symbol of the Romanian postal services (a horn), the face value (5 Lei) and the word "POSTA". On the stamp, overprinted in red, one can distinguish the acronym of the association, A.R.L.U.S., the added value +5 and the date 1-9 XI 1947 (November 1st – 9th, 1947, the 2nd A.R.L.U.S. Congress) (**Addenda, Plate 5, pictures 11- 12**). In circulation 15 days late, as per ministry decision no. 23 796, published in the O.J. no. 231/October 7th, 1947 (part I), the first day of the issue was supposed to be October 15th, the stamp saw a run print of 250 000 pieces (imperforated), with a postage

charge of 60 days. Amounts resulting from selling this issue but, exclusively, just the amounts resulted in the 5 Lei overcharge, were to benefit ARLUS¹⁸. A new ministry decision (no. 25 244/ October 25th, 1947), that regulated distribution of this stamp issue was to be published in the official journal a day before issuing the stamp (O.J. no. 250/ October 29th, 1947; part I)¹⁹. Together with the stamp conservatory and the general direction of Post, Telegraph and Telephone services P.T.T., ARLUS (with a 30 000-issue distribution), the Universal Postal Union is also mentioned (its headquarters in Bern), Romania being, under signature of George Lahovary, one of its founding members (1874)²⁰.

The year 1948, besides the “*forceful debut*” of a new regime aiming for setting up “*prosperity and proletariat equality*” in the lives of Romanians, also brings about, as per the 1950 *Official Philatelic Catalogue of Romanian People’s Republic* (quote “*Here it is for the first time in a Romanian catalogue the first day cover*», which makes it a *special chapter*”), a premiere in the Romanian philately: issue of the first *first day covers*. As regards the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Soviet Union Ties, on the occasion of its 2nd Congress, a (surprisingly) private initiative gave way to an issue of two envelopes designed by the philatelist Eros Laszlo (Vasile Eros)²¹, created at the *Kiss Jenő* publishing house in Cluj²². The two envelopes, identical in size (9.8/15.5 cm), share the same graphic elements: The Bucharest Athenaeum and Kremlin (the Spasski tower), with a difference with regards to their layout in the two *first day covers*. While the Romanian Athenaeum and

¹⁸http://digitool.bibmet.ro:8881/R/5FIKB7NTKA7MYHT9RIB8PT9VV2AQM6HHNXD6UX7FYQ49MT59MI-15729?func=results-jump-full&set_entry=000005&set_number=001717&base=GEN01; (August 2021).

¹⁹http://digitool.bibmet.ro:8881/R/5FIKB7NTKA7MYHT9RIB8PT9VV2AQM6HHNXD6UX7FYQ49MT59MI-15778?func=results-jump-full&set_entry=000012&set_number=001717&base=GEN01; (August 2021).

²⁰ “Poșta română- 150 de ani de tradiție și modernitate” (“Romanian Postal Services – 150 years of tradition and modernity”): <https://www.romfilatelia.ro/ro/poata-romana-150-de-ani-de-traditie-ai-modernitate/>; (September 2021).

²¹ Cristian Andrei Scăiceanu, *Istoria mișcării filatelice din România (History of the philatelic movement in Romania)*, Oscar Print, Bucharest, 2011, p. 381.

²² “Arlus 1948”, source: <https://altmarius.ning.com/profiles/blogs/arlus-1948>; (August 8th, 2021).

Kremlin symbolically represent, on the envelope that shows the issue triptych (**Addenda, Plate 6, picture 14**)²³, Bucharest and Moscow (situated on a map that reproduces the two countries “united” by a flying airplane), the envelope that was franked by the 3-value issue + 2 labels are a different matter. One can readily notice how the Spasski tower in the background visually dominates the entire graphic design, with the Romanian Athenaeum in an inferior, subordinate position (**Addenda, Plate 6, picture 13**)²⁴. Even though the two landmark buildings differ architecture wise in that the Kremlin symbol stands above the real dimensions of the Romanian Athenaeum in size, the way they are portrayed in the stamp issue highlights this difference and emphasizes the new political reality, underlining, at the same time, the role Moscow wishes to play in the region.

In circulation on October 20th, 1948, as per the Ministry of Communication decision no. 17 476/ September 30th, 1948, published in the “Official Journal” no. 240/ October 15th, 1948, part I²⁵, the postmarks were printed in heliography, with a perforation of 14:14 1/2 and 14 1/2: 14²⁶, respectively, in 40 000 to 300 000 copies, with a size of 42x26 mm. The same decision, dated from September 30th, 1948, stated that 95% of all revenue resulting in the overcharge was to be transferred to A.R.L.U.S. accounts and used by the association. The graphics herein, besides Spasski tower (on the ultramarine blue postmark, no label, with a 15+15 Lei added value) also show the Soviet Hero Monument in Victory Square (on the red postmark, face value 10+10 Lei) and the A.R.L.U.S. representation (on the green postmark, face value 10+10 Lei). Two labels accompany the 10+10 Lei postmark, while keeping the main postmark colours (red and green), with the following words: “*The soviet army is an army that respects other*

²³ Min. Culturii Direcția Generală a Editurilor și Difuzării Cărții I.C.S. Filatelia, *Catalog Filatelic Oficial al Timbrelor Republicii Populare Române (The Official Philatelic Catalogue of Romanian People's Republic stamps)*, Întreprinderea Poligrafică, Bucharest, 1954, p. 64.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ http://digifool.bibmet.ro:8881/R/SCB3RXY9874KT777NIJUJFE9TGU86VVL9LT1UNIPDGT841LUFM-07270?func=results-jump-full&set_entry=000047&set_number=000477&base=GEN01; (September, 2021).

²⁶ Dragomir & Surpățeanu, *op.cit.*, p. 242.

peoples. *It is the peacekeeping army in various countries. Stalin*” (on the label in red), *“May the Romanian-Soviet friendship always live”* (on the label in green). As regards the triptych, a 14 1/2: 14 perforation was kept, with two intermediary perforations, and it was heliography printed in 40 000 copies on 14 filigree vellum. The value of this postmark was set for 20+20 Lei overcharge.

As for the postmarks dedicated to the 3rd (November 3rd-5th, 1950) and the 4th Congress (October 8th-9th, 1955) of the friendship organization, these are no longer as rich visually, compared to the previous issues. This time, the designers only opted for a series of visuals that would suggest "brotherly" ties, at least for the 1950 issue (**Addenda, Plate 7, pictures 16-17**). With regards to the issue dedicated to the 4th A.R.L.U.S congress (**Addenda, Plate 7, picture 18**), the graphics that used to speak to solid ties between Romania and the U.S.S.R. are completely missing, a clear indication of an initial distancing from the “big brother from the East”.

Concerning the 1950 issue dedicated to the 3rd A.R.L.U.S. Congress, it was heliography printed on white XV filigree (the R.P.R. – Romanian People’s Republic filigree), in orange and blue (with the same face value of 11 Lei), a 13 1/2 perforation and a run print of c. 1 500 000 series, while the graphic design was entrusted to Nicolae (Niky Popescu)²⁷. The R.P.R. coat of arms covered by the two flags, the tricolour and the red flag with its sickle and hammer and the text that reads “A.R.L.U.S. – the 3rd General Congress” dominate the centre of the stamp. Around the two sides of the postmark and at its base, framing the center of the stamp, a compact group of silhouettes (workers and peasants) holding tricolour flags that fly in the wind “unite” two columns of golden ears of wheat.

An early sign of distancing from the U.S.S.R. most likely, the postmark dedicated to the last A.R.L.U.S. congress (October 1955) saw a run print of 1 000 000 copies, heliography printed on white XVI filigree (R.P.R.), ultramarine on yellow background in colour, with a perforation of 13 1/2²⁸. The graphics of the mark are simple compared to the first A.R.L.U.S. issues, without the symbols that would entrench the “monolith”

²⁷ Dragomir & Surpăţeanu, *op.cit.*, p. 248.

²⁸ Ibidem.

ties of the two workers' parties. Therefore, the designer of the stamp, unheard of so far, used a coat of arms as graphic symbol, based on two laurel wreaths, with the following text "inscribed" at the center: "The 4th A.R.L.U.S. Congress Bucharest October 1955". In 1964, nine years following this congress and after the adoption by the Political Bureau of the P.M.R., in April 1964, of the "*Declaration on the position of P.M.R. concerning the international communist and workers' movement*", the association was dissolved²⁹. During 1950-1955, in between the two A.R.L.U.S. congresses in the 1950s, more precisely in 1951 and 1952, two stamp issues were published "*to benefit the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Ties with the U.S.S.R.*": October 11th, 1951 (**Addenda, plate 8 pictures 19- 20**) October 7th – 22nd (or November 7th), 1952 (**Addenda, plate 9 picture 21**).

Heliography printed, on white XVI filigree paper (R.P.R.), the designer, Dimitrie Știubei, opted, concerning the two postmarks of the 1951 issue, for the same graphic elements, but in different colours (reddish-brown and orange). The designs represent the coats of arms of the Soviet Union and the Romanian People's Republic framed by two wreaths of laurel, at the base of which the symbol of peace is represented, a white dove. Two scarves are wrapped around the two wreaths, one on each wreath, displaying the words "The Romanian-Soviet Friendship Month". For the two postmarks the face value of 4 Lei, for the reddish-brown stamp, and a face value of 35 Lei, for the orange stamp, were set. On this occasion, an extensive article was published in the 13th issue of "Filatelie" magazine (Romanian for "Philately"), which is rather a "laudation" to the great Soviet people and, especially, to its "brilliant leader": "*...Our people understands very well that without the Soviet Union they would not have been able to conquer their freedom and independence, the wounds of the war could not have been healed and we would not have stepped on the path to economic, cultural and well-being today. So today, as we prepare to celebrate the 34th anniversary of the October Revolution, our brightest thoughts, our warmest love, and our deepest gratitude go to the wonderful*

²⁹ "A.R.L.U.S.- Asociația Română pentru strângerea legăturilor cu Uniunea Sovietică": <https://amintiridincomunism.wordpress.com/tag/a-r-l-u-s-2/>; (March 13th, 2021).

homeland of Socialism, the Soviet Union, and to its brilliant leader, the best friend of our people, the banner of the struggle for peace, Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin.”³⁰. What independence, freedom and, above all, the friendship of the great Soviet people meant for the Romanian people, the keys in which these concepts were interpreted, and the very special vision in which they were interpreted, we found out in the 45 years of communist control.

One of the issues that shows an extremely clear and convincing message in support of the communist propaganda in Romania, from the point of view of the graphic elements represented on the postmarks, is the 1952 issue. The DRALCO group (Ion Drugă, Lipa Alămaru, Ilie Costescu) and Leonida Nazarov, the layout designers for the two stamps of the issue, turned to the most powerful communist symbols represented on A.R.L.U.S. postage stamps until then. Thus, on the postage stamps with a value of 55 *bani* (the subdivision of the Romanian Leu), the graphic designers' group DRALCO chose for representation the statuary group made by Vera Mukhina, “*Worker and Kolkhoz Woman*” (**Addenda, plate 9 picture 22**). Made for participation at the Paris World Exhibition (1937) with the official theme “Art and technology in modern day life”, the statuary group emphasized, once too often, the ideological orientation and, at the same time, demonstrated the superiority of the Soviet economic system.³¹ Made of bronze (base) and stainless steel, about 25 metres high and weighing 75 tons, the statuary group is a classic example of socialist realism in art. With a remarkable simplicity in the realization of the two characters that make up the statuary group, characters that exude, in addition to youth, determination and dynamism on their way to a bright future, “*Worker and Kolkhoz Woman*” embodied, in fact, the unity between the two social categories that are at the basis of the communist party, the workers and the peasants³². The communist party was, in the

³⁰ “Filatelie”, October 1951, issue no.13, Year II, Romanian-Soviet Friendship Month, p.4.

³¹ “Muncitorul și femeia din Kolhoz- Worker and kolhoz woman”: https://ewikiro.top/wiki/Worker_and_Kolkhoz_Woman; (June 2022).

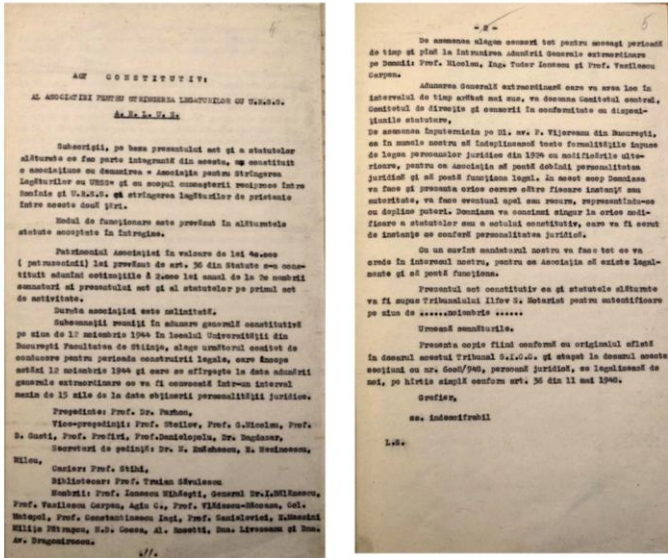
³² “Sculpture- Worker and kolhoz woman. Author of the monument?": <https://ro.koshachek.com/articles/sculptura-muncitor-si-femeie-din-kolkhoz.html>; (May 2022).

vision of the leaders in Moscow, the only party capable of solving the serious problems of the capitalist society. Concerning the second stamp of the issue, with a face value of 1.75 Lei, the graphic designer Leonida Nazarov, in order to create the graphic design, he chose to be inspired by artist Pavlin Nazarie's illustration of Dan Deşliu's poem, "*Grivița vie (Living Grivița)*" (**Addenda, plate 9 picture 23**)³³. The central panel of the postmark is completed by images of the two "fraternal" republics and the related flying flags, this graphic assembly being flanked on both sides by two columns of ears of wheat (probably). From the point of view of completing the propaganda message given by the graphic elements of the stamp, what is interesting is the text behind it: "We are building socialism using the help and experience of the great Soviet Union". The 1952 issue, heliography printed on white XVI filigree paper (R.P.R.), in the colours brick-red, for the stamp with a face value of 0.55 Lei, and sepia-brown for the 1.75 Lei one, was the last issue, until 1955 (the year of the last A.R.L.U.S. congress), of a successive series of stamp issues dedicated to the U.S.S.R. friendship association. The postal issues that appeared in 1953 și 1954, as they were made, were exclusively dedicated to the friendship relationships between the Soviet Union and Romanian People's Republic, without being explicitly associated to the friendship association. This situation can be related to an initial distancing by the P.M.R., on account of different vision in terms of workers' parties relationships (and not only), from the Soviet Union, especially following I.V. Stalin's death in 1953.

For 20 years (1944-1964), the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Soviet Union Ties proved to be an extremely important driver, playing a solid role among the "popular masses", in the process of communalization of Romanian society, in disseminating Marxist-Leninist ideas through the actions and activities it carried out. The role and place of the A.R.L.U.S postage stamps within the communist propaganda mechanism employed in Romania is, essentially, impossible to measure, considering the fact that sociological studies regarding the impact of this type of propaganda were non-existent. Certainly, however, considering the

³³ Cosmin Năsui, "Pavlin Nazarie": <https://www.cosminnasui.com/2020/02/pavlin-nazarie/>; (June 2021).

degree of literacy of the Romanian society at the time, this role was not a negligible one. Pairing the images on the A.R.L.U.S. postage stamps with the actions and events carried out by members of the association within Romanian society at the time, the relatively large number of stamps published for each separate issue, during 8 years (1945-1948, 1950-1952 and 1955), ensured an easy identification of the association (at least in its early years) within the Romanian society, amongst the communist-oriented associations that appeared after 1944. Besides being a visual mark of the association, the A.R.L.U.S. stamps, through their visuals, also intended to inoculate the Romanian public consciousness with all those elements that were easily recognizable by the public, all those symbols and iconography of Soviet origin. In terms of propaganda, the images on the stamps issued by the Romanian state “for the benefit” of the A.R.L.U.S. association have, most likely, fulfilled their intended purpose.



Picture 1. The A.R.L.U.S. Certificate of Incorporation (Source: National Archives of Romania, A.N.R.- The Central Historical National Archives Department, S.A.N.I.C., the Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Soviet Union Ties fond, inventory no.: 1773, file nr.1/1944- 1945, pp.4-5).

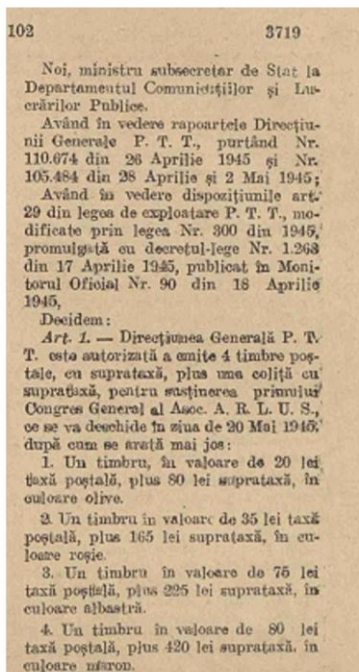


Picture 2. A.R.L.U.S. membership card (the author's collection).

Picture 3. A certificate granted by A.R.L.U.S. for "fruitful didactics" (the author's collection).



Plate 1

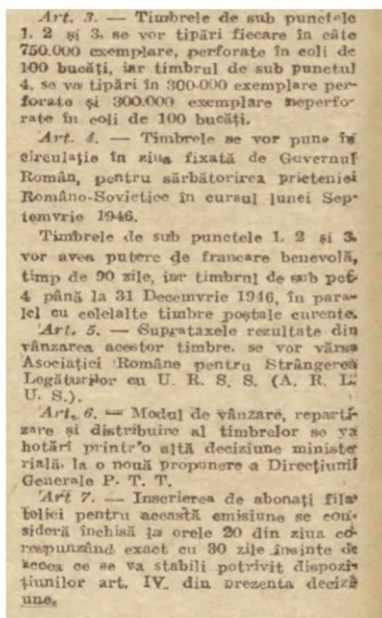
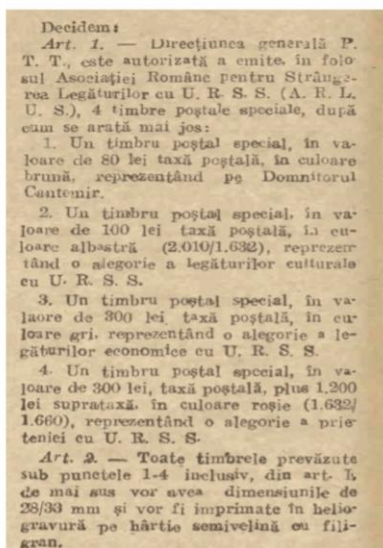


Picture 4. Facsimile. The decision to issue and circulate the stamp issue dedicated to the first A.R.L.U.S. congress (OJ no. 102, May 4th, 1945).

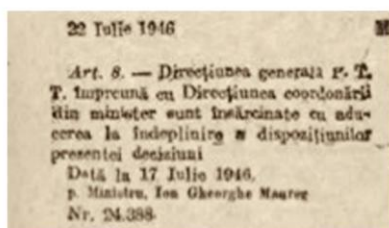


Picture 5. Picture 5. A.R.L.U.S.- The First General Congress 1945, designers I. Cova and I. Molnar

Plate 2



Picture 6. Facsimile. Decision no. 24388 on the publishing and circulation of the A.R.L.U.S. postage stamp issue-October 20th, 1946 (O.J. no. 167, July 22nd, 1946).

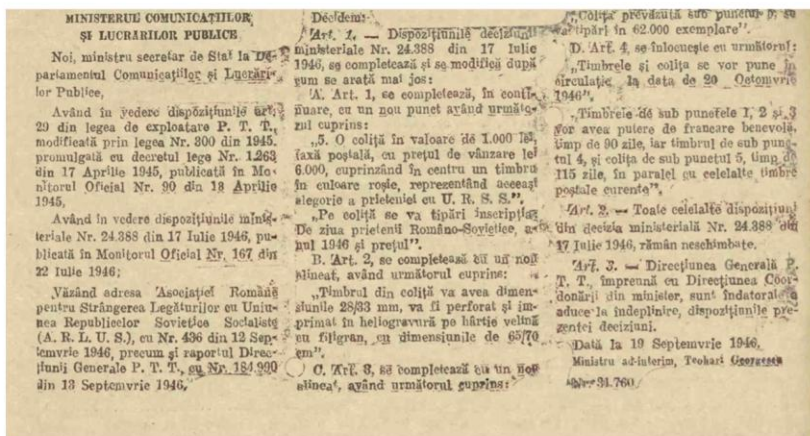


Picture 7. (in detail) the date and number of decision no.24388 (O.J. no. 167, July 22nd, 1946).



Picture 8. The A.R.L.U.S. postage stamp issue-The Romanian-Soviet Friendship Day - October 20th, 1946, Designer: Oswald Adler.

Plate 3



Picture 9. Facsimile. Decision no. 30 760 (supplementary) as to the issue and circulation of the A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue and sheet-October 20th, 1946 (O.J. no. 223, September 26th, 1946).



Picture 10. ARLUS sheet-block: to mark the Romanian-Soviet Friendship Day on October 20th, 1946, designer Oswald Adler.



Picture 11. The King and his Country stamp issue, 1947, designer Ary Murnu.



Picture 12. A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue (with overprint), 1947, designer Ary Murnu.

Plate 5



Picture 13. A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue and first day cover - A.R.L.U.S. 2nd Congress, designer Iosif Cova (for the issue) and Eros Laszlo (first day cover).



Picture 14. Triptych- A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue - The 2nd A.R.L.U.S. Congress, designer Iosif Cova (triptych) and Eros Laszlo (fdc).



Picture 15. A.R.L.U.S. postage stamp issue with mark and triptych on envelope, uncirculated- The 2nd Congress (author's collection).

Plate 6



Picture 16- 17. The A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue and fdc - The 3rd A.R.L.U.S. Congress, designer Nicolae (Niky) Popescu; first day of issue: November 2nd, 1950 (author's collection).



Picture 18. The A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue - The 4th A.R.L.U.S. Congress, first day of issue: October 8- 9, 1955 (author's collection).

Plate 7



Pictures 19- 20. The A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue and fdc - designer Dimitrie Știubei; first day of issue: October 11th, 1951; (author's collection).



Plate 8



Picture 21. A.R.L.U.S. stamp issue- graphic design: the Dralco collective group (Ion Drugă, Lipa Alămaru, Ilie Costescu; for the 1.75 Lei mark: Leonida Nazarov (after a work- Nazarie Pavliu); first day of issue: October 11th, 1951; (author's collection).



Picture 22. Worker and Kolkhoz Woman, Vera Mukhina.

Picture 23. Pavlin Nazarie illustration – the “Grivița vie” (“Living Grivița”) poem, Dan Deșliu; Cosmin Năsui Collection.



Plate 9