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Axa prioritară 1 *Educația și formarea profesională în sprijinul creșterii economice și dezvoltării societății bazate pe cunoaștere*

Domeniul major de intervenție 1.5 *Programe doctorale și postdoctorale în sprijinul cercetării*

Titlul proiectului: *Științele socio-umaniste în contextul evoluției globalizate – dezvoltarea și implementarea programului de studii și cercetare postdoctorală*

Contract: POSDRU 89/1.5/S/61104

Beneficiar: Academia Română

Mentor/ expert științific

[Signature]

Instituția coordonatoare de tematică: Academia Română – Filiala Iași

Tematica: *Discurs literar-artistic și construcție identitară în secolele XVI-XX*

Numele și prenumele cercetătorului postdoctoral: Ionuț Nistor

Tema individuală de cercetare: *România și aromânii din Balcani în timpul celor două războaie mondiale. Discurs politic și construcție identitară*

Historical speech, propaganda and diplomatic strategies. The Romanians in the Balkans during the Second World War II

The past and the cultural specificity over time of the Romanians on the right side of the Danube attracted the interest of many scholars – historians, geographers, ethnographers – and politicians in an attempt to trace the evolution of these communities and to protect their values, as well as to highlight the “blood” relations with the Romanians on the left side of the river, which would justify the interest and the intervention of the Romanian state in the area. The majority of

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the works in the field focused on the linguistic peculiarities, traditions, customs or the folklore of the Romanian minority in the Balkans and the approaches are, in most cases, sequential, both chronologically and thematically. The historians interested in the subject have offered rather general perspectives on the evolution of the various groups of South-Danubian Romanians and the involvement of the authorities in Bucharest in protecting their specificity. With few exceptions,¹ the concern to investigate the past of these communities focused mainly on stages when the political and military stability at international level offered peaceful frameworks of cultural and institutional development, and the diplomatic strategies of Romania considered the good neighbour policies and the agreements that regulated the normal functioning of the relations between states. Few papers have analyzed, however, the evolution of the South-Danubian Romanian communities during World War II, an event that changed the natural course of those people's lives as citizens and minorities in the Balkan states, as well as the priorities and perspective of the authorities in Bucharest.

The analyses dedicated to the events between 1940 and 1944 have captured the political and military relations between Romania and European countries from different angles, highlighting the economic, social and human implications of the conflict, and analyzed Romania's efforts to recover the territories lost in 1940 and to articulate a diplomatic and military strategy on the 'East-West direction.' Equally important was, in our view, the attention that Ion and Mihai Antonescu gave to the southern borders of Romania and to the Balkan area in general, therefore, to the Romanian communities there. The military operations in the East or the intentions often expressed by Marshal Antonescu to liberate and unite Bessarabia, northern Bukovina and the lost half of

¹ Gh. Zbucnea, *O istorie a românilor din Peninsula Balcanică (secolele XVIII-XX) [A History of the Romanians in the Balkan Peninsula (18th-20th centuries)]*, Bucharest, 1999; Idem, *Problema aromânilor în timpul celui de-al doilea război mondial [The Issue of the Aromanians during World War II]*, in *Perenitatea vlahilor în Balcani. Istorie și civilizație aromânească [The Continuity of the Vlachs in the Balkans. Aromanian History and Civilization]*, Aurel Papari (coord.), ed. II, Constanța, 1996.

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Transylvania, which were much commented on in Romanian historiography, seemed to have monopolized the interest of the authorities in Bucharest in 1941-1944. Nevertheless, the “southern direction,” reorganizing the Balkans, redrawing the borders and protecting the interests of the Romanian population in the area had been equally important for the Romanian policy makers, although they attracted less attention to specialty writings.

Starting from these findings based on archival documents, we deem it appropriate to provide a detailed research on Romania’s perspective on the Balkans during the war and especially its intention to geopolitically reconfigure the region in the peace projection. To this aim, the research directions addressed in this study focus on the manner in which Romania built its arguments and developed a propaganda strategy to sustain its point of view at the end of the conflict, by analyzing the scientific writings of the time, which were politically tailored and made available to Romanian and foreign decision makers or the public opinion, as well as the themes of the militant historical discourse.

The Romanian authorities were intensely concerned about the “Europe of tomorrow” projection, dating back to the war. The debates in the “Committee for the preparation of documentary, information and propaganda material” represented a good opportunity for the political factor, which had power of decision, as well as for specialists to analyze Romania’s place in the future European “architecture”. The prospects were obviously different, the new world order under whose auspices the geopolitical edifice was to be built was essential for the reconfiguration of the area, but constituted the main unknown element.

In April 1943, when the conflict was far from concluded, but there were signs of Germany’s failing, Al. Otetelișanu, Professor of Law, member of the Committee, argued that the future Europe would no longer be founded on the principle of political balance “determined by the Westphalia

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peace” because this would have meant “a great misfortune for us, as well as for the continent,”² while “the principle of the Axis nations, that is of vital areas” did not seem an appropriate solution either. He concluded: “if the principle of political balance would prevail, or the principle vital areas or the idea of the European confederation, we must prepare our works for any of these approaches.”³ On a similar tone, maybe a little more reserved when criticizing the Westphalia system, the speech of Mihai Antonescu, the Chairman of the committee, emphasized the need to structure an argument in order to promote the Romanian interests, irrespective of post-conflict global organization. He pleaded for drafting works that would present “Romanian realities, our interests and our orientation in world trends”⁴ and was less open to debates about the principles and foundations of the European construction after the conflict, because these were problems beyond their competence. “We are not a world power with the historic responsibility of guiding the world civilization,” said Mihai Antonescu and further added that “Europe itself is lagging behind the world forces engaged today in the conflict and in any case, organizing the future peace will not depend on Europe alone. Even if the idea of collaboration, the idea of rational organization prevailed ... if the idea of vital areas prevailed, that is still a balance.”⁵

Given this interest, expressed since 1941, for the reconfiguration of the borders and the place that the Romanian people, in its entirety, would have in post-war building, the government in Bucharest, coordinated by Mihai Antonescu, organized a series of advisory committees and initiated a comprehensive program to prepare documentary material that would support the requests of the Romanian delegation at the future peace conference. Among the constant concerns of these bodies was the fate of the Romanians on the right side of the Danube, for whom the

² Committee for the preparation of the material for the peace conference, April 1, 1943, in ANIC, ‘Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri’ fund. Cabinet Militar, file no. 380, 1943, f. 92.

³ *Ibidem*, f. 92.

⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 94.

⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 93.

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authorities granted significant funds from the general budget and who attracted the interest of the politicians and the propaganda apparatus through the human and geo-strategic potential, as well as the ethnic and cultural ties with the Romanians on the north side of the river.

Significant for the manner in which Ion Antonescu government related to the issues of the Aromanian community and its role in Romania's foreign policy is also the report of the technical advisor within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August Culiani, 1941. He argued that "to give guidance today, in the midst of the current world war, about the means to improve the cultural situation of Romanians in the Balkans, would seem a premature claim, not knowing what the political situation of the Balkan countries will to be at the end of the war, what will be the concept of those who will dictate peace on the treatment of minorities within the new Europe."⁶ He also said, however, that the Romanian state should be "vigilant on the fate to be created in the future for the Romanians in those countries through the peace treaty."⁷

Mihai Antonescu claimed, in turn, in June 1942, at the meeting of the Political Section of the Peace Bureau, that the issues of the Balkan Romanians should be of particular concern to the government in Bucharest⁸ and that it was necessary for the competent authorities to consider "the possibilities of solving our rights and our right to protect this population."⁹ Both views showed the special interest that Romania intended to afford to the Romanian communities in view of the peace conference and invoked the legitimacy of state intervention to protect the interests of this population. Moreover, the effort made by politicians and experts to prove the ethnic and historical

⁶ Report no. 7024/1941 of the technical advisor, August Culiani, in ANIC, "Ministerul Culturii Naționale și al Cultelor" fund, file no. 1444, 1941, f. 8v.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ Meeting of the Political Section. Directives and guidance given by Mihai Antonescu, June 16, 1942, in *Arhivele Militare Române*, fund no. 948, file no. 713, f. 5-27, in *Pacea de mâine. Documente ale Comisiei constituite în vederea pregătirii conferinței de pace de după cel de-al doilea război mondial (1942-1944) [The Peace of Tomorrow. Documents of the Committee Appointed to Prepare the Peace Conference After World War II (1942-1944)]*, ed. Petre Out, Bucharest, 2006, p. 72.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 74.

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relation between the Romanians on both sides of the Danube and to outline an area of interest for Romania which would also include the Balkan area was constant and consistent throughout this period.

Mihai Antonescu stated, on the same occasion, that “for this documentary material we have to collect figures, statistics, information by all means, to focus all our diplomatic action to show the fate of these Romanians”¹⁰ and, at the same time, “to insist on the issue of the Romanian people as a mission of marginal people,” “to present Romania as a factor of European order and reconstruction or as a factor of European conservation and, if needed, to compare it with the famous apostolic mission in the Danube basin.”¹¹ As a matter of fact, Antonescu’s speech revisited a number of themes commonly used by the Romanian diplomacy at the beginning of the twentieth century. Placing the Romanian people in a border area and investing it with high qualities, which could provide stability in an agitated area, could be a factor of stability and a solid pillar for European reconstruction, in a civilizing and institutional meaning, are evocative of an older speech, from 1903, of Prime Minister Ionel Brătianu, who claimed that “Romania stands at the Eastern gates of the civilized Europe.”

Relevant discussions on the importance that the Balkan Romanians had in Romania’s foreign policy strategy were also held during the meeting of July 8, 1942 of the Peace Bureau, in “The Committee for press and propaganda.” The previous interest shown by the Romanian diplomacy and the intellectual elite in Aromanians and Romanians in Banat was supplemented with the concern for the inclusion in the sphere of “Romanism,” which had to be protected and assumed as a strategic priority, of the inhabitants of Timoc and Morava. The efforts to build a scientific argument to support the diplomatic approaches, Romania’s claims on these populations and to a possible geopolitical reconfiguration of the area were intense and perseverant, and the

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 76.

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documentary sources and methods are most varied. Z. Pâclișanu, member of the Committee, argued at the meeting in June 1942 that there were already a number of works devoted to the Macedonian Romanians and to those in Timoc, concluding that “there are works in place and material is being collected every day.”¹² As regards the Romanians in Timoc, he also added: “We have an extraordinary wealth of material, we have genealogical sketches for certain families going back to the 17th century, showing how they went from father to son and at some point a “vici” was added at the end; we have photos of the inscriptions on tombs from early 19th century in Romanian ...”¹³

The competition for the use of sources and writings on the evolution of the Romanian communities south of the Danube was not only a race against possibilities and time, but also against the propaganda of the countries in the area, which could have similar claims to these regions historically claimed by Romania. Aurel Cozma, member of the same Committee, introduced, to this end, a work dedicated to the Romanians in the Yugoslavian Banat, written in German and very well documented, which he claimed to have been designed for publishing in Vârșeț. He advised the leaders of the Romanians in the area “not to print it there, because the typography could sell the documents to the Hungarians, and they would publish a book before us. I advised them to come to the Ministry to publish it.”¹⁴

Suggestive for the manner in which these discussions were held, the approach to the issues and the cooperation between the policy makers and the academia is the meeting of March 20, 1943 of “The Committee for the preparation of the information and propaganda documentary material” in view of the peace conference. The discussions presided by Mihai Antonescu – vice president of

¹² Peace Bureau. Committee for press and propaganda, July 8, 1942, in ANIC, “Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri” fund. Cabinet Militar, file no. 512, 1942, f. 255.

¹³ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

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the Council of ministers – were attended by specialists in various fields, summoned by the government to provide solutions to problems that the central administration deemed fundamental for the future of the state. The meetings within the Peace Bureau were occasions for mutual information on Romania's strategic intentions, as well as on the progress of researches and possible ways to ensure the scientific infrastructure for the requests of the Romanian state. The program of this team, divided into sections, was established by Mihai Antonescu since 1941, from the onset of the systematic concerns with structuring a position to be articulated at the future peace forum, but the work method was focused not so much on the information that the members of the reunited committees offered to the policy makers, but mainly on debates regarding geo-strategic, economic, financial or territorial issues.

At the meeting of March 20, 1943 the debates were attended by Ioan Petrovici – Minister of National Culture and Religious Affairs, Al. Neagu – Minister of Finance, Mircea Vulcănescu – Sub-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Finance, Al. Marcu – Secretary of State at the Ministry of National Propaganda, Gr. Forțu – General Commissioner for Refugees, General I. Steflea – Chief of Staff, Ovidiu Vlădescu – Secretary General of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers), Prof. G. G. Mironescu – President of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, Prof. I. Simionescu (geographer and geologist) – President of the Romanian Academy, Prof. Horia Hulubei (physicist) – Rector of Bucharest University, Prof. Simion Mehedinți (geographer) – Chairman of the Geographical Committee, Prof. Eftimie Antonescu (economist), Prof. G.N. Leon, Prof. Gh.I. Brătianu (historian), Prof. C.C. Giurescu (historian), Prof. I. Lupaș (historian), Prof. Silviu Dragomir (historian), Prof. N. Dașcovici (jurist), Prof. N. Cornățeanu (agronomist), Prof. D. Ionescu-Sisești (agronomist), Prof. Dimitrie Gusti (sociologist), Prof. Victor Papacostea (historian), Prof. Șt. Ciobanu (historian), Prof. Al. Otetelișanu (jurist), Prof. G. Strat, Prof. Vintilă Mihăilescu (geographer), Prof. Ioan Hudiță (historian), Pan Halippa, I. Davidescu – Minister

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Plenipotentiary, V. Stoica – Minister Plenipotentiary, M. Barcianu – Minister Plenipotentiary, Prof. I. Chinezu – Consul General, I. Solomon – advisor, I. Mitilineu – Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, S. Moscuna – first secretary of legation, Mircea Popescu – first secretary of legation, Zenobie Pâclișanu, Aurel Cozma – Minister-Counsellor, Emanoil Bucuța, Al. Bădăuță – Secretary General of the Ministry of National Propaganda, Sabin Manuilă – Director General of the Central Institute of Statistics and Radu Budișteanu – lawyer. Among the issues discussed on that occasion was the situation of the Romanians in the Balkans, in view of articulating an active propaganda, which would justify the relations of these minority groups with the Romanian state and the latter's interest in protecting them and, thus, in any territorial reconfiguration of the area that would have affected the interests of Romania. The presence of personalities of national and international reputation from various fields gave weight to the meeting and offered an image of stability, representativeness and relevance of the conclusions.

The guidelines for the works of the Committee were outlined by Mihai Antonescu, who, revisiting one of the points of the program for the preparation of the information and propaganda documentary material, addressed to Gh. Brătianu, C. Giurescu and V. Papacostea his request to prepare papers on the problems and changes in the Balkans. He insisted that the three historians write articles about Romania's rights and interests in the area, which he undertook to pass on to the foreign press. He also asked for writings about “the mission of the Romanian people in the East, the issue of Bessarabia as European soil or the relationship between us and the Russians.”¹⁵ He gave assurance that, to the extent that these works would be completed, he would make the necessary appointments to the typography of the Official Gazette and “all printers that may have a

¹⁵ Committee for the preparation of the information and propaganda documentary material in view of the peace conference, March 20, 1943, in ANIC, ‘Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri’ fund. Cabinet Militar, file no. 380, 1943, f. 28.

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European circuit.”¹⁶ Mihai Antonescu also committed to translate some works and set up a propaganda program abroad for the benefit of academics and personalities who were to visit other countries.¹⁷

The collection of the documentary material was made especially with the help of “volunteer” specialists with interests in researching the history of the Balkan Romanian communities, the international legal norms and the geography of the area. Mihai Antonescu, as coordinator of the program, received proposals for papers and projects, and the decision to publish the materials was to be taken by the Committee. Thus, in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Propaganda and the presidency of the Council of Ministers there were collected numerous works, many unpublished, all of which dealt with the same theme: evaluating the past and the current situation of the Romanian communities in the Balkans. It is difficult to explain why not all the texts were published. Although some seemed more like fragments or chapters of large works, they fit the criteria established by Mihai Antonescu: they were short and suggestive through the information provided. Due to lack of time¹⁸ and other editorial priorities, some of these documents did not enter the public circuit. They remained, however, well preserved in the archives, and when necessary, they could serve, together with already published works, as useful resources for government projects.

There existed, however, more systematic efforts to write scientific works with propagandistic purposes, starting from the themes proposed by Antonescu. They were produced by a group of intellectuals with solid historical formation, who, through their academic position could organize, advocate and institutionalize a research program which would also serve political purposes. This is

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 85.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 86.

¹⁸ Already in 1943-1944 the priorities had changed, the officials now tried to find solutions to remove Romania from the war beside Germany alături de Germania.

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the case of Victor Papacostea, who undertook at the same meeting, on behalf of the Institute for Balkan Studies and Research, to send the program of papers that were to be written within 3-4 months. He specified that, following the discussions with his colleagues at the Institute, they had decided to work on a synthesis with a larger participation “on the work undertaken by the Romanian state and the Romanian people in the Balkan Peninsula as factor of culture and civilization from 1500 until nowadays.”¹⁹ The book would be accompanied by a film designed to record, from Istanbul to Mount Athos and from Epirus to Jerusalem, “all the foundations built with Romanian funds from Brâncoveanu and even before, with all the inscriptions to prove it.”²⁰ Based on the program established by the government, according to its intention to collect and disseminate scientifically-based propaganda materials in order to make known the origins and the continuity of the Romanians in the Balkans to the public opinion and the policy makers, a series of specialty works were published and reprinted during the period 1940-1944.

The main function of these texts was, in our opinion, to prepare the documentary material that would be used as a political instrument at the peace conference, as well as to inform the decision makers in the Romanian capital and a small audience consisting of specialists. The lack of translations in international languages, which would provide visibility to the perspective promoted in Bucharest, and the lack of clear indications demonstrating the distribution of funds for printing and disseminating the works in various media, confirms this hypothesis. The works by Capidan and Pușcariu, published in German, are mere exceptions, confirming the lack of a systematic effort of the Romanian authorities in this respect. The collection of the texts and the publishing of some of them, a process carried out between 1941 and 1943, is only a preliminary phase, a first step in articulating a position of the Romanian state. However, the propaganda structures certainly used themes and ideas from the arsenal provided by the specialists for ordering and producing press

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 75.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

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articles published in central newspapers, such as “Curentul”, “Viața”, “Timpul” – printed in Bucharest, or local ones, such as “Dacia” – printed in Timișoara, which were distributed in areas inhabited by Balkan Romanian groups and had to transmit a message with nationalist overtones, in response to the propaganda carried out by neighbouring states. The works published during the war and the intense concerns of the specialists should be analyzed not only from the perspective of the political imperative, but also considering the pattern assumed by many researchers, whose condition as “militant historians” was based on their own beliefs and an entire historiographical evolution.

The themes of the historical discourse and of the geographic, ethnographic and linguistic analyses reflect, at the same time, the perspective that the Romanian authorities had towards their neighbours and the geo-political configuration of the Balkans. The absence of systematic concerns for the Cadrilater, whose fate had been decided at Craiova, in 1940, was compensated by an interest in other areas that had not been a part, up to “the moment 1941,” of Romania’s claims list. The region Timoc-Morava and the Serbian Craina were new claims that were not included in the political program of 1919 and for which the Romanian state consumed energy and money.

On a practical level, it was unlikely that the authorities in Bucharest had taken into account a territorial expansion in this area, just as it would have been difficult to claim Macedonia, although they had spent millions of lei with propaganda for both regions. If they had really wanted to include the Romanian communities in Serbia within the new borders, they would not have missed the opportunity presented by Hitler in 1941, when Yugoslavia broke apart. Romania’s refusal to participate in sharing the old ally was justified by Mihai Antonescu through considerations of morality and honour, according to which the Romanian state should not collaborate in any way with the Hungarians, with whom they had territorial disputes, but was underlain by a precautionary measure against a possible diplomatic trap. The adjudication of territories that Romania had never

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claimed until then could have been considered a compensatory measure that would have compensated the Romanian State for the loss of Northern Transylvania, a hypothesis inadmissible in Bucharest. The interest of the policy makers and the role of the propaganda literature produced during the war were rather based on the intention to protect the rights of the Romanians in the Balkans and to create pressure on the European powers in order to recognize the legitimacy of Romania's intervention in regional issues and in a possible redrawing of the borders at end of the war, but also to force a favourable resolution of the territorial disputes activated in 1940.

Around and during a war that made full use of word and image as weapons, the Romanian authorities realized rather quickly the importance of propaganda, not so much as part of a trend, but in order to convey their political and national program and to respond with similar means to discursive constructions coming from outside that were perceived as challenges. Mihai Antonescu, who was closely concerned with the organization of the propaganda service, thought that the need to collect and export information that would present Romania's problems and claims was essential whereas the Bucharest officials wanted to prepare the public opinion and the European policy makers in view of the peace conference. Thus, the role of propaganda became fundamental and the efficiency of the system was essential in wartime conditions. One of the options that the Romanian government had available was to use the radio as a means of transmitting information, a means successfully used by other states involved in the war and which provided, in theory, a quick dissemination of the official views to a large number of "receptors." The analysis of the propaganda phenomenon and the use of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company (SRR) as an "unconventional weapon" is therefore important in order to reconstitute the political and diplomatic strategies of the Romanian state in World War II, as well as the place the Balkan area held on the agenda of the government in Bucharest.

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According to the Decree-Law no. 2740 of August 14, 1940²¹ the state took full control over the SRR, stating that: “The broadcasting of any kind of speech, music and images, as well as their distribution, by wire or wireless, is a public service monopolized by the State with political, cultural, educational, informative and entertaining purpose. This public service is placed under the authority, coordination and supervision of the Ministry of National Propaganda.”²² At the end of the month there were also approved the operational rules of the SRR, which established that the General Subdirectory of Programs was the decision making body for the preparation, production and broadcasting of programmes, and the subdirectory was the one who gave “the good show.”²³ These general rules were added up along the way, in the spirit of the ideas that Mihai Antonescu tried to impose as obligations not only to the Romanian press, but also to academics. Thus, the new framework for the operation of the public radio cannot be judged outside the projects of the Ministry of National Propaganda, to which it was directly subordinate or outside the general perspective of Antonescu, who was himself in the position of Minister of Propaganda and “the grey eminence” of the subordinate structures. He had clearly established during the discussions within the Peace Bureau that the major priority for the bodies set up to prepare the future peace conference was to collect documentary materials about the rights and interests of Romania and to publicize them in order to prepare the public opinion and the diplomatic environments until the end to the war. The involvement of experts – historians, geographers, statisticians, ethnologists, economists – had to be complete, especially since the neighbours of the Romanian state were developing powerful propaganda programs. The major interest for the regions detached from Romania in 1940 and for the Balkan area was obvious, considering the significant funds allocated

²¹ The decree-law remained in force until 1944.

²² Eugen Denize, *Istoria Societății Române de Radiodifuziune [The History of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company]*, vol. I, Part II, 1938-1944, Bucharest, 1999, p. 14; also see, Mioara Anton, *Propagandă și război. Campania din Est 1941-1944 [Propaganda and War. The Eastern Campaign 1941-1944]*, Bucharest, 2007, p. 68.

²³ Eugen Denize, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

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to propaganda in the area and the influx of publications devoted to them. The area south of the Danube, especially Timoc, along with Northern Transylvania, was considered a key region by Mihai Antonescu because “the Hungarians spent annually billions for propaganda”²⁴ and was included in almost all government programs. Right from the moment Romania entered the war, some strategic directions were set, including the cultural endowment of the annexed provinces by establishing libraries and cultural centres, initiating programs for the Romanians in Timoc and the ceded part of Transylvania by subsidizing newspapers, setting up a weekly newspaper and several occasional publications designed to fill in the need for information of the population.²⁵

The media in general and especially the radio became, under these conditions, essential factors in transmitting information according to the program and view of the Romanian government. SRR’s strategic priorities during the war were, in fact, faithful replicas of Mihai Antonescu’s directives and systematically replayed the great themes of his speech. „Darea de seamă a Consiliului de Administrație” [The report of the Board of Directors] for the year 1941 pointed out that the work performed during the respective year was circumscribed “to the Romanian revival and stimulation,” whose main objective was “to reach all the chords of the Romanian soul, to integrate everything within the current major needs and to maintain with the thrill of the word the resistance power of the country.”²⁶

The interference and the control exercised over SRR by the political decision-maker factor, the program schedule and the broadcasted messages were achieved through special legislation, as well as by imposing a leadership composed of personalities from the public environment who were

²⁴ Mioara Anton, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁶ Archive of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company (ASRR), *Dărilor de seamă asupra activității desfășurate anual [The Reports on the Annual Activity]*, 6/1928 (1928-1947), *Darea de seamă a Consiliului de Administrație și Raportul Consiliului de Cenzori către Adunarea Generală Ordinară a Acționarilor din 14 martie 1942 [The Report of the Board of Directors and the Report of the Censors Council to the Ordinary General Assembly of the Shareholders of March 14, 1942]*, XIV, Year 1941, p. 6.

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approved by the regime and attached to its government principles.²⁷ The structure of the management positions within the SRR accurately reflected the orientation and the political dynamics of the government in Bucharest, the co-opting of the Legionnaires and, then, “the divorce” between the Iron Guard and Ion Antonescu, with immediate effects on the Board of Directors of the SRR.

The second level of interference of the political authorities in SRR activity was legislative. Between 1940 and 1944 there were drafted a series of general and special laws which governed the operation of the radio and set the frameworks within which the Board of Directors and the Director General could exercise their prerogatives. One of the measures that affected the programs schedule of the radio and the reorganization of the Romanian propaganda was adopted on May 6, 1941. “The working instructions for the departments and services of the general subdivision of programs” stipulated that the literary director was to take measure so that all lectures broadcasted “would be assimilated within the current needs of the nation, they would be related to the current events or they would bring into the present great accomplishments from the past.”²⁸ Lecturers would be chosen from among known culture people to give legitimacy to the discourse and it was specified that the presentation should not contain polemics or aggressive, trivial, immoral formulas or which would “instigate to hatred against state order or damaging to our relations with foreign countries.”²⁹ Here, there was probably here a direct reference, but subtly expressed, to the “truce” signed on November 15, 1940 between Romania and Hungary, which provided that sensitive topics, such as the issue of Transylvania, should not be addressed in the propagandas of the two

²⁷ Antonescu’s level of involvement or of the management and propaganda structures in the activity of the radio is difficult to establish. We know, in this respect, only about the existence of the general and special legal framework and the existence of an agreed political leadership, but not about the internal decision-making mechanism within the SRR, much less, as yet, if and up to what level the changes of programs, discourse, and theme were the result of the external intervention of the political leadership or whether they were caused by the Radio Company’s own bodies.

²⁸ Archive of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, file 42, 1941, f. 5 apud Eugen Denize, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²⁹ Archive of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, file 42, 1941, f. 6 apud *Ibid.*, p. 24.

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countries.³⁰ A media directive stipulated, in the same sense, that “towards Hungary we will maintain our reservations [...] we will straighten coldly and objectively the false allegations made at our expense.”³¹

Starting from the general principles set out in the “Instructions” of May 1941 and the directives of Mihai Antonescu, Ioan Petrovici³² opened for discussion in the SRR Board of Directors the reorganization of the spoken program³³ and the systematization of the radio conferences by creating organic series of programs on topics of history, literature, philosophy, applied sciences, travel descriptions, etc., to give “our University a high educational role.”³⁴ These series were programmed at specific hours, either at 17.45, or at 21.00, so that listeners could easily identify them, and they were achieved with the contribution of the best known and appreciated specialists of the period. The first series began on June 15, 1941 under the title “The Borders of the Romanian people,” and the series of conferences was opened by the lecture of V. Papacostea about Michael the Brave. Among historians of the time, who spoke in these programs to the public in the country and abroad, are also included: Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Constantin C. Giurescu, Silviu Dragomir, Theodor Capidan and Emanoil Bucuța. The daily program hosted a series, which lasted between two to four weeks,³⁵ and the first series of programs had the following sequence: Sunday – “The country seen by our writers,” Monday – “Great modern technical inventions,” Tuesday – “The wealth of the Romanian subsoil,” Wednesday – “Literary pages from the work of our

³⁰ Mioara Anton, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³¹ Eugen Denize, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

³² Ioan Petrovici was a member of the Board of Directors of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company.

³³ Radio Romania broadcasts were divided into three categories: spoken programs, music programs and mixed programs.

³⁴ „Radio Universul” [Radio Universe], 343, May 24, 1941, p. 5; see also *Darea de seamă... [The Report ...]*, Year 1941, p. 6.

³⁵ In 1941, the duration of the series varied between one and two weeks, and from 1942 the standard duration was one month.

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politicians,” Thursday – “Romanian contributions to the Russian spiritual life,” Friday – “Universal spiritual values,” and Saturday – “World Literature. Modern Epics.”³⁶

In total, in 1941 there were broadcasted over 300 conferences and 223 reviews,³⁷ in 1942 – 309 conferences and 236 reviews,³⁸ and in 1943 – more than 400 conferences and 200 reviews.³⁹ The report of the Board of Directors of 1942 emphasized that these programs were integrated “in the current needs of the Romanian soul, as well as into the universal,” “Radio University” focused on presenting current problems and preparing the propaganda material necessary to the Romanian state in view of the peace conference. Among the topics that were broadcasted there were included: “The Romanian space,” “Factors in the unity of the land and of the Romanian people,” “Grounds for the national idea,” “The beginnings of Romanian state,” “Issues of the Romanian labour,” “Issues of global economy.”⁴⁰ For 1943, the same Board of Directors reported that the series “Radio University” focused on issues of current cultural, social and economic issues, as well as issues of political and national interest, Transylvania taking first place among the thematic directions. Among the series broadcasted throughout the year, there were included: “The issue of our continuity,” “Cultural establishments of Transylvania,” “Transylvanian journalists,” “National

³⁶ „Radio Universul” [Radio Universe], 352, July 26, 1941, p. 7; „Radio Universul” [Radio Universe], 353, August 2, 1941, p. 7.

³⁷ *Darea de seamă ... [The Report ...]*, Year 1941, p. 6.

³⁸ ASRR, *Dărilor de seamă asupra activității desfășurate anual [Reports on the Annual Activity]*, 6/1928 (1928-1947), *Darea de seamă a Consiliului de Administrație și Raportul Consiliului de Cenzori către Adunarea Generală Ordinară a Acționarilor din 14 aprilie 1943 [The Report of the Board of Directors and the Report of the Censors Council to the Ordinary General Assembly of Shareholders of April 14, 1943]*, Year 1942, p. 5.

³⁹ ASRR, *Dărilor de seamă asupra activității desfășurate anual [Reports on the Annual Activity]*, 6/1928 (1928-1947), *Darea de seamă a Consiliului de Administrație și Raportul Consiliului de Cenzori către Adunarea Generală Ordinară a Acționarilor din 28 martie 1944 [The Report of the Board of Directors and the Report of the Censors Council to the Ordinary General Assembly of Shareholders of March 28, 1944]*, Year 1943, p. 5.

⁴⁰ *Darea de seamă ... [The Report ...]*, Year 1941, p. 5.

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heroes,” “Great Transylvanian prelates,” “Schools that created a Romanian conscience,” “Transylvanians in the Romanian culture,” etc.⁴¹

The interest in the past of the people as a whole, the exaltation of national feelings, the historical, geographical, ethnic, statistical and political analyzes have been central themes of the radio discourses in various radio programs presented by three of the most prestigious Romanian historians: Gh. Brătianu, C. C. Giurescu and Victor Papacostea, all of them members of the Historical Section of the Peace Bureau.⁴² Ideas such as the Latin origin, the autochthony, the continuity and greatness of the past are common in their speeches. Through short historical insights, the three experts provided the listeners not only with a frame of reference and a set of information, but they also educated in the national spirit, presented models, giving the public the feeling that there was a legacy to defend, that they, all of them, on both sides of the Carpathians and of the Danube were “a historical enigma and miracle.”

Michael the Brave, by the acts of his unions, had stimulated the national solidarity and “was an expression of strength and generosity that should be ideal of each of us and of all of us together,”⁴³ said Victor Papacostea. He also noted that despite the position “at the crossroads of bad winds, where the Romanian people had been fated to live,” the Romanian political system proved better, as Moldavia and Wallachia “as small as they were, they survived.”⁴⁴ Mircea the Elder, Stephen the Great or Ferdinand I, leaders whose name are connected with the founding documents of the medieval Romanian states and the maximum expansion of the modern state,

⁴¹ *Darea de seamă ... [The Report ...]*, Year 1943, p. 5.

⁴² The Peace Bureau was an advisory body organized by the Romanian government, with the task of preparing the propaganda material and informing the public and the European policy makers, promoting the interests of the Romanian state in view of the peace conference.

⁴³ Victor Papacostea, *Mihai Viteazul [Michael the Brave]*, June 15, 1941, Radio University – Series: „Marginile neamului românesc” [Borders of the Romanian People], in ASRR, file 7, 1941, f. 72, p. 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

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were, in turn, celebrated. C.C. Giurescu, who held conferences dedicated to Stephen the Great⁴⁵ and Mircea the Elder, in the series “The Pinnacles of the Romanian borders,” also argued that “in our history, the periods of political pinnacle always coincided with epochs of territorial expansion.”⁴⁶ He mentioned Burebista, Mircea the Elder, Stephen the Great, Michael the Brave, Carol I and Ferdinand I, whose ages are milestones in the national history.

“The highest peak among the pinnacles in the troubled history of the Romanian borders” was, in Gh. Brătianu’s opinion, the reign of Ferdinand I. The unified boundaries, the ideal of “the entire Romanism” were the natural result of “the sacrifices of the Romanian people, their validity going deep into the reasons for the existence of our nation, as well as in our most distant past.”⁴⁷ These boundaries established in 1919-1920 “were not an improvisation, nor the win of the dice thrown to chance,”⁴⁸ but a vivid expression, a natural process of development. Maintaining these borders was, according to Brătianu, the reason why Romania entered the war, and those who fought on the front knew that Ferdinand’s borders, no matter the “new order that would rule the continent, are a prerequisite of peace and prosperity, because they represent the justice, which shall not perish.”⁴⁹

The simple messages, easy to decipher for uneducated listeners, the direct, accessible style alternated with interventions tailored to academic patterns, proper university lectures, where the experience of the researcher and teacher was obvious. The program “The historical grounds for the

⁴⁵ C. C. Giurescu, *Ștefan cel Mare [Stephen the Great]*, March 4, 1941, conference at the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, in ASRR, file 15, 1941, f. 16-22.

⁴⁶ C. C. Giurescu, *Muntenia lui Mircea cel Bătrân [Wallachia of Mircea the Elder]*, October 9, 1941, Radio University – Series: „Momente culminante ale granițelor românești” [The Pinnacles of the Romanian Borders], in ASRR, file 15, 1941, f. 147.

⁴⁷ George Brătianu, *România lui Ferdinand I [Romania of Ferdinand I]*, October 30, 1941, Radio University – Series: „Momente culminante ale granițelor românești” [The Pinnacles of the Romanian Borders], in ASRR, file 16, 1941, f. 46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 47.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 48.

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national idea” is part of this registry, and Brătianu provided the public with an interesting analysis of the historical phenomena in general and the spiritual foundations of the Romanian people. He began his speech by calling on the meanings that Renan gave the nation and continued by comparing the historical evolution of the Romanian people with that of the Western and Eastern neighbours. Brătianu wanted to dismantle the theories that maintained the idea of “A Romania of the congress, an artificial creation of the great powers,” concluding that “The grounds for our existence as a nation are, for centuries, in the community of blood and speech.”⁵⁰ He also justified the participation of Romania in the war, as an effort to recover the lost territories and compared the situation of the Romanian state with that of Germany and Italy, whose involvement in the conflict was justified by the need to remove the injustices of history.

In March 1941, Brătianu spoke on the radio about geopolitics and tried to familiarize the public with the new term, so often used by the German school led by Karl Haushofer. Gh. Brătianu started from the definition of the concept,⁵¹ and continued with a brief historical incursion. The analysis was meant to prove two things: the long use of the principles of geopolitics⁵² and the need of the Romanian state to apply these principles in their disputes for redrawing the borders.⁵³

⁵⁰ Gh. I. Brătianu, *Temeiurile istorice ale ideii naționale [The Historical Grounds for the National Idea]*, January 19, 1943, Radio University – Series: „Temeiurile ideii naționale” [Grounds for the National Idea], in ASRR, file 1, 1943, f. 7-8.

⁵¹ The definition given by Gh. I. Brătianu to geopolitics was: “Politics applied on the map, suitable for the geographical needs, in whose drawing is written so many times over the centuries the destiny of nations.” See Gh. I. Brătianu *Geopolitica. Factor educativ și național [Geopolitics. An Educative National Factor]*, March 19, 1941, in ASRR, file 15, 1941, f. 6, p. 1.

⁵² Brătianu said “Geopolitical views have been used and applied by the great leaders and diplomats at all times, long before they made it a systematic and orderly discipline or a branch of public education,” in *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵³ Gh. Brătianu argued on the same occasion: “What was the propaganda war of our western neighbors based on, if not on the masterful use of the geo-political argument? Nothing was missing from the arsenal: from maps built with such knowledge of the shades of color of Count Teleki, to the more or less millennial rights of the Crown of St. Stephen [...] And towards this attitude imprinted as a total and totalitarian directive of a whole nation [...] we have not been able to respond but with indifference and inertia, whose effects we could not straighten in late rush for publications and evidence,” *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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Through the explanations he offered to the listeners and the conclusion that “Geopolitics must use the educational and persuasive value of the map to guide the public spirit” and that “it strengthens our belief that nothing is lost, as long as we keep intact and relentless the conscience of the eternal relationship of this people with its land ...”⁵⁴, the historian justifies, in part, the usefulness of this kind of radio interventions and the need to broadcast, even in a more elaborate form, the information to the Romanian public.

In fact, this “erudite propaganda,” as called by the French byzantinist Albert Failler⁵⁵ was a trait of that age, and the militant involvement of the historian was a constant. “The new school of history,” published in the 30’s, maintained, despite the assumed sober and distant attitude towards the political and ideological involvement of the historian, the rejection of imagination and the detachment from the passions, a strong national vein.⁵⁶ The study of Romanian history not only as an act of knowledge, but also of national pedagogy,⁵⁷ the civic involvement and the harmonization of the militant approaches with the scientific were leading principles for Gh. Brătianu and “his colleagues of the same generation.” Ideas similar to those exhibited in radio interventions are found throughout Brătianu’s entire work, and the effort to investigate the national history has been a constant throughout the so-called “national decade” - 1937-1947.⁵⁸ The themes and principles conveyed at the microphone of Radio Romania were similar to those presented in the works *Une énigme et un miracle historique: le peuple roumain, Origines et formation de l’unité roumaine* or

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Ion Toderașcu, *Notă asupra ediției [Note on the Edition]*, in Gh. I. Brătianu, *Cuvinte către români. Zece conferințe și prelegeri [Words Addressed to the Romanians. Ten Conferences and Lectures]*, Iași, 1996, p. LXIII.

⁵⁶ Idem, *Unitatea românească – discurs istoric [The Romanian Unity – A History Speech]*, in Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Originile și formarea unității românești [The Origins and the Formation of the Romanian Unity]*, Iași, 1998, p. XIV.

⁵⁷ Idem, *Notă asupra ediției [Note on the Edition]*, in Gh. I. Brătianu, *Cuvinte către români. Zece conferințe și prelegeri [Words Addressed to the Romanians. Ten Conferences and Lectures]*, Iași, 1996, p. XXXVIII.

⁵⁸ Idem, *Un savant și un soldat [A Scholar and a Soldier]*, in *Ibid.*, p. X.

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Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești [The Historical Tradition about the Foundation of the Romanian Principalities], all designed and published during this period.

The interest of the experts in rewriting the national history and the perspective they had assumed were met with the concern and the decision of the political factor, who had decided to prepare in good time their claims in view of the post-conflict conference. Moreover, Mihai Antonescu asked the Peace Bureau to change the work methods of the historians, as their research would become “an activity of national system.”⁵⁹ Starting from this project, the Historic Section of the Peace Bureau decided in July 1942, to create some works focused on the place and the role of the Romanians within the European civilization, the evolution of the historical provinces and the conditions under which the dismantling of the borders of Romania took place.⁶⁰ The volumes edited as a result of this program⁶¹ and the interest of the specialists in the field, were works of scientific value, but they were also used in the propaganda action conducted by the government in Bucharest. They were published in foreign languages and sent to legations, consulates and foreign libraries in an attempt to popularize the past, the rights and the views of the Romanian state.

In this context, the radio could be an effective means of transmitting the messages and of broadcasting over large areas in a more dynamic way and to a large audience of socio-cultural heterogeneity the opinions, which, scientifically based and filtered by censorship, could help to shape some popular trends. But this tool, so often as used at that time in other states,⁶² did not seem to be in fact as well one of the priorities of the Antonescu regime.

⁵⁹ Petre Otu, Aurel Pentelescu, *Gheorghe I. Brătianu. Istorie și politică* [Gheorghe I. Brătianu. History and Politics], Bucharest, 2003, p. 74.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁶¹ Gh. Brătianu committed under this program to prepare a paper about the origins and formation of the Romanian unity and about Bessarabia, both in 1943; see *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁶² The Romanian authorities were aware of the usefulness of the radio propaganda. St. Iacobescu, General Technical Subdirector, quoted in this regard in the article *Popas pe drum nou* [Stop-over on a New Road], in the magazine

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Although raised to the level of indispensable weapon in the information war, the Romanian authorities did not use the radio efficiently, did not exploit all its capabilities and did not turn it into one of the main means of propaganda. The existence of areas inside or outside the borders of Romania uncovered by the radio signal, the poorly organized network, the amateurism of the civil servants directly responsible for the fate of the radio propaganda, the small financial resources allocated to the endowment of the Romanian communities in the Balkans with receiving devices, the restrictive legislation in the field and the lack of a numerous and geo-socially diverse audience were major problems of the system managed by the Romanian government. In this context, what was the point of programs broadcasted within the series “Borders of the Romanian People,” “The Pinnacles of the Romanian Borders” or “Decisive Battles in the History of the Nation,” whom did they address and what were the results expected by those who designed and implemented them? Interventions made by Brătianu, Papacostea, Giurescu, Capidan or Silviu Dragomir had a strong historical character, with scientific foundations and, at the same time, they met educational and propaganda functions. They were intended to inform, as well as to educate a diverse public, and the exaggerations and rectifiable nuances by a rigorous historiographical criticism were perfectly justified by their multiple function. The authority of the voices that presented the lectures could be an effective means of capturing the public attention, and the combination of the academic style with the least sophisticated clearly indicated that the audience was composite, but in any case with an above average level of understanding. The interest aroused by these series, the good reception of the broadcasted messages and the success enjoyed, in the end, by the shows of Radio University, are based on the volume of letters received by the magazine “Radio Universe” and the requests received from the audience to print the conferences.⁶³ The purpose of these programs was

“Radio Romania”, of January 5, 1941, Hitler, who said that without trucks, airplanes and radio he could not have conquered Germany. See Eugen Denize, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁶³ “Radio Universe”, 422, November 28, 1942, p. 5.

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to present to the public relevant aspects of Romanian history or to highlight the lesser known areas and communities, but also to arouse reactions, feelings, to awaken through experiences and values of the past the consciousness of a “heritage” to defend and to justify the current political and military involvement. They were meant to gather the people around the idea of a nation under siege, with a reputation to defend and borders to restore and to bring together its energy around Mihai Antonescu’s program and perspective.

The shows dedicated to the Romanians in the Balkans highlight the interest of the authorities in Bucharest in this area and their themes and methods are included in the canon of the period. They presented, like the literature published in the same period, the organic connection of the north-Danubian Romanian character with that in the Balkans, thus justifying the concern for the historical recovery of the communities in the area and the articulation of a political rhetoric in view of the peace conference.

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01.03.2012

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