

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING “ETHNIC CULTURALISM” IN THE INTERWAR ROMANIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

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Abstract. The interwar Romanian authorities specializing in external cultural representation such as *The Press Direction* within the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* and latter *The Ministry of Propaganda* based the external cultural representation of Romania on the trinomial rather difficult to understand in the West (Latinity-Orthodoxy-Ruralism). In the interwar period, the so-called “ethnic culturalism” in the external cultural representation had its adversaries. T. Vianu considered Ethnic culturalism *the grandiosity of misery* while E. Filotti (...) *rustic simplism that finds its existence between the churchyard and the village tavern*. The opponents of “ethnic culturalism” were exaggerating. Given that 82%¹ of Romania’s interwar population was rural, Romanian culture was primarily close to popular traditions and was just natural to be represented as such. “Ethnic culturalism” was not the equivalent of *Archaism*. Expressions of “Ethnic Culturalism” in the state cultural policy can be considered the *Neo-Romanian* style, derived from the *Brancovenesc* style in architecture (which became a “brand” of the Romanian state) *the Ballad* of Ciprian Porumbescu, *the Romanian Rhapsody* of George Enescu, the sculptures of Costantin Brâncuși. Talking about external cultural representation in the manner of “ethnic culturalism” and its relevance we are also debating around the issue of collective memory and its determinants.

Keywords: *Cultural Diplomacy; International Relations; History; Collective Memory; Romanian Culture*

In the interwar period there were voices that note for Romania the rusticity of external cultural representation, which puts folklore and in general representations of more or less archaic popular traditions in the foreground. It is the case for the pre-war, inter-war cultural representations with the specification that when they opted for traditional, folkloric representations, the pre-war or inter-war “cultural ambassadors” represented a real world, contemporary to them, representative for

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¹ Andrei Tudorel, Ghețau Vasile, *Serii istorice de date – Populația României 1860-2020*, INS-National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2021, <https://insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Populatia-Romaniei/populatia-romaniei-1860-2020-serii-istorice-de-date.pdf>, accessed at 5 September 2024.

the lifestyle of the majority of the country's inhabitants in a country where the traditional way of life, customs and folklore was a way of life, not an object of exhibition and folklore show (more or less kitsch).

In the interwar period, the so-called "ethnic culturalism" in the external cultural representation had its adversaries, although as we said before, unlike today, at the time the archaism of the Romanian village, the rural culture, the folklore were all "real and alive", a part of daily life, consonant with the realities of the country. The words of the literary critic Tudor Vianu (one of the most vocal adversaries of "ethnic culturalism") are relevant in this sense: (...) *if the program of "ethnic culturalism" were to prevail, Romanian culture would descend into the inferiority of a province.*² On the same note, the publicist, the diplomat and the one who was the head of the "Press Department" of the MAS (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)³, Eugen Filotti⁴ considered: (...) *traditionalism, simply, means the grandiosity of misery (...)*⁵ respectively: (...) *Under the sign of orthodoxy and tradition, some wave the static ideal frozen in Byzantine-Muscovite hieratic forms of a primitive culture, without evolution and without a horizon. Our ideal of culture is dynamic, eager for increase, renewal, fecundity. Not in clinging to a sterile tradition and, in many respects, not in the exclusive cultivation of the autochthonous character ... we see the purpose of the agitation of our generation ... The sense of culture that we understand to preach is European. Our light comes from the West, in the Westernization of this country (...) we see the escape (...). For us there is no antagonism, no incompatibility between Europeanism and Romanianism. We only have the sacrilegious desire to harmonize Romanianism with the pulse of contemporary life (...) This life (...) we demand it unfold of Balkanism, of Asianism, of archaism and of the rustic simplism that finds its existence between the churchyard and the village tavern (...). There are, from the Atlantic to our border, enough nations that have managed to be European without losing any of their specificity their ethnic spirit.*⁶

As an expression of Ethnic Culturalism can be also considered the Neo-Romanian style, derived from the *Brancovenesc* style in architecture, as a brand of the Romanian state before and between the wars (developed in a multitude of forms in private or public constructions). We have no information about the application of subsidies or legislation that specifically encourages this

² Tudor Vianu, "Reply" to "Parsifal" (by Nichifor Crainic), quoted by Basil Munteanu in *Panorama de la littérature roumaine contemporaine*, Paris, 1938, p. 180 (my trans.).

³ The press department at MAS- Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the main institution in charge with foreign cultural propaganda of the country. In 1940 the Press Department will become *The Ministry of National Propaganda*. The term *foreign cultural propaganda* covers in many respects what is labeled as today as public and cultural diplomacy. According to the "Anglocentric" bibliography, the term Cultural Diplomacy would have been used for the first time in 1954 in New York Times, and in official documents in 1959 in US. In Hungary, the term "Cultural Diplomacy" has been used as such since the mid-1930s. In 1937, so two decades before the mention in the New York Times, the book *The Basics of Cultural Diplomacy (A kultúdiplomácia alapvetése)* was written by János Hankiss.

⁴ Eugen Filotti will become in 1935, *Director of Press and Information* in MAS (Foreign Affairs Ministry) the institution responsible for Romania's image in the world.

⁵ Eugen Filotti, *Gândul nostru and Europeism sau românism*, in "Cuvântul liber", II series, no. 1, pp. 2-4 and no. 2, pp. 18-19 (my trans.).

⁶ *Ibidem*.

architectural style as a brand of *Romanianism* but the political immersion was nevertheless unavoidable. In the cities of Transylvania united with Romania, we notice that after 1920 most of the public buildings (public buildings, churches, palaces) were built in *Neo-Romanian* style (the Orthodox cathedrals in Timișoara and Cluj, the building of the Greek-Catholic high school in Oradea, etc.) as a clear political message. By the end of the third decade it seems that the group of “modernists” and opponents of “ethnic culturalism” had some success in the conditions in which Romania’s participation in the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1937 will be under the sign of “modernism”.⁷ The most obvious sign would be the architecture of the Romania pavilion made by the architect Duliu Marcu in which the sober minimalist style replaced the traditional architecture present in previous universal exhibition participations.⁸

As for how the country itself was seen abroad, archaic or modern, and if “archaic” what kind of “archaism” we don’t really have trustable sources. Quite a lot has been written in the last two decades, especially by Laurentiu Vlad, about the image of Romanian national identity.⁹ However, we tend to believe based on archival sources, secondary sources as well as the analysis of foreign articles about Romania, that most of them are paid articles, subsidized by the Romanian state, written on the basis of materials sent by Bucharest. The image propagated by these articles is much too similar to the image desired by Romanian propaganda abroad with the materials created by the *Press Directorate* (and latter the *Ministry of Propaganda*) to be genuine inspired by personal direct experience. Considering the importance of this subject and the amount of controversy it triggers we feel the need to insist by providing below some documented evidences collected by various authors and also by myself in the archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Archive of the Romanian Propaganda Ministry (which also contains a large number of documents from the *Press direction* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Laurentiu Vlad study about the Romanian image in the French journal *L’Illustration* mentions subsidies, paid authors or the acquisition of a large number from a particular edition.¹⁰ It was especially the case for special numbers dedicated on purpose to a certain event (for example 10 years since the proclamation of *Great Romania*). Robert Beauplan was paid by *Press Direction* to write and introduce several articles about the King Carol II restoration in 1929.¹¹ After 1929, more consistent articles about Romania appear under the signature of Robert Beauplan and

⁷ Laurențiu Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale – România la expozițiile universale și internaționale de la Paris (1867-1937)*, European Institute Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Laurentiu Vlad, *Ecouri românești în presa franceză, L’Illustration, 1843-1944*, Bucharest University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005; *Idem, Imagini ale identității naționale – România la expozițiile universale și internaționale de la Paris (1867-1937)*, European Institute Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, *Idem, Pe urmele “Belgiei Orientului”, România la expozițiile universale sau internaționale de la Anvers, Bruxelles, Liege și Gand, 1894-1935*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2004; *Idem, Images de l’identite. La Roumanie de Carol II aux Expositions universelles, in Povoires et mentalites, texts reunis par Laurentiu Vlad a la memoire de Professeur Alexandru Duțu*, Babel, Bucharest, 1999.

¹⁰ Laurențiu Vlad, *Ecouri românești în presa franceză, op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

George Oudard and are generally related to the “Carlist” restoration.¹² The same author will also have the volume *Portret de la Roumanie*, Paris 1935 published with the subsidy of the *Press and Propaganda Department*.¹³ Between 1930 and 1946, 96 articles and photo reports about Romania were published in *L’Illustration* including an album *La Grande Roumanie* financed by the Press Directorate to mark the ten-year anniversary of the existence of Greater Romania.¹⁴ The laudatory articles sometimes alternate with negative, most likely unsubsidized analyses, such as the 1939 article by political analyst Pierre Ichac.¹⁵

Another relevant document (found by myself), is an answer of the head of Romanian legation in Belgrade (October 22, 1925) to the ministry’s proposal to pay 400,000 dinars per year to a journalist to insert three articles a week about Romania in the German-language newspaper “Belgrader Zeitung”: *I am not of the opinion that we should pay for a newspaper written in German and which Serbs do not read. I would have addressed the big newspapers that really interest public opinion, such as Pravda, Politika, Vremea. Regarding the prices, I am not surprised. I let you know that newspaper publications are expensive and thus are paid for by all other embassies.*¹⁶

From another document dated 1930 we are told that the *Press Service* distributed 61 articles to the legations. The articles were generally according to the reports of *cultural attachés* published in one way or another (especially with subsidies). Sometimes the press *attachés* or *cultural attachés* report failures due to the refusal of the Press Directorate to accept the publication of an article due to the financial incentive requested by the editors of the respective publication (...) *It is neither our intention nor our ability to obtain publication in exchange for remuneration (...)*.¹⁷ MAS (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs) requested in 1938 in a circular letter addressed to Romanian diplomatic representation, among other things, a point of view in relation to the efficiency of subsidies granted to the foreign press or various publicists. The opinions received are divided. Regarding the subsidies granted to publications, one aspect was emphasized... once started, they had to be continuous, because often a periodically subsidized publication remained in debt or its subsidies were cut, as reprisals it became a hostile publication supporting the opinions and campaign of the opponents.¹⁸ Also Mircea Eliade wrote in a *Report as press attaché* in Lisbon that at the moment various publications in Lisbon publish articles already drafted by the

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁵ Pierre ICHAC, “*A travers l’Europe trouble*, VII, – *La Roumanie au Carrefour de deux routes*”, in *L’Illustration*, 97^e année, n° 5018, 6 May 1939, pp. 15-16 quoted by Laurentiu Vlad in *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁶ Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – MAE fond Romania (Propaganda), vol. 475./f. 143-144 (The head of Romanian legation in Belgrade to the head of Press Direction from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

¹⁷ AMAE (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive) Fond Romania, vol 482, f. 137-139 (Director of the Press Direction to the Minister).

¹⁸ ANICT (National Central Historical Archive), fond MPN (Ministry of National Propaganda), dossier 1045, ff. 1-61 (Synthesis Report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the author is not mentioned).

Legation of Romania for instance he is trying to win the friendship of some Portuguese media and culture people so that in the future they themselves will write favorable articles about Romania.¹⁹

The contemporary literature such as the *Balkan Trilogy*²⁰ or, disparate travel impressions are more credible for the image of Romania in the eyes of foreigners. This kind of materials reveals a mixed image of a country in which coexist luxury and poverty, archaism and modernity. The so called "published travel impressions" which were not under the control of the Romanian propaganda were a permanent reason of concern with various proposals to control the "phenomenon" such as a "discrete guidance" of foreign travelers (especially journalists) to "desirable routes".²¹ The image of the "westernmost" state in the Balkans is also plausible as it is confirmed by several sources.

With the advantage of a time perspective can be said that the opponents of "ethnic culturalism" were exaggerating. Given that 82%²² of Romania's interwar population was rural, Romanian culture was primarily archaic, close to popular traditions and was fair and natural to be represented as such.²³ Outside the folklore inspired cultural manifestation there were few available things. There were outstanding painters, but their paintings were depicting mostly the rural life, there was a Liviu Rebreanu but his works were majestic depicting the Transylvanian rural world. There were no translations of the Romanian writers either classics or contemporary and no Romanian language experts to make these translations, a fact insistently emphasized by the cultural/press attachés. At the time there was indeed a *History of Romanians* by Nicolae Iorga translated in French, English and German always requested by the Romanian diplomatic missions but its dissemination among the general public was rather modest.²⁴ Mircea Eliade as *press attaché* in Lisbon will write a small history of 80 pages "Romanians,

¹⁹ The Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, fond România (Propaganda), vol. 479, ff. 269-271.

²⁰ Book written Olivia Manning, first published first time in 1960 with several editions, including a BBC radiobroadcast series adaptation in 1974 and a BBC adapted movie in 1987.

²¹ Romanan Legation in Budapesta note no 4123, 10 of November 1938 Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs AMAE, fond Romania, vol 474/f 251.

²² Andrei Tudorel, Ghețau Vasile, *Serii istorice de date – Populația României 1860-2020*, INS – Institutul Național de Statistică, Bucharest, 2021 <https://insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/Populatia-Romaniei/populatia-romaniei-1860-2020-serii-istorice-de-date.pdf>, accessed at 5 September 2024.

²³ The fact that the percentage of the urban population in the context of the forced industrialization applied by the communists increased to 52% in 1990, (the highest in Europe, however next to Poland), does not say much in the conditions in which behind the "gray concrete cloak" of the neighborhoods of "Ceaușist" blocks, there is a whole rural world with rural mentality and customs, but this time distorted, torn from their natural environment, with regrettable aesthetic consequences. We are not the only ones; the situation is about the same from Vladivostok to Poland. Hungary or the former Yugoslavia, due to their geographical proximity to the West, are a bit better off. To note that the *Rusticism* (today still present and sufficiently "exotic") has its charm, in the presence of infrastructure and comfortable conditions, but the trend of replacing traditional peasant houses with "bunkers" dominated by concrete, galvanized sheet and polystyrene facades painted in colors screaming does not help the national brand.

²⁴ National Central Archive (ANIC), *Fond MPN – Ministry of National propaganda* (Informații), file. 864, f. 20.

Latins of the Orient”, published in Lisbon in 1943 to fill an almost total void in terms of knowledge of the Romanian people in this country and not only at the level of ordinary people but also of intellectuals.²⁵

Infused by Ethnic Culturalism was the documentary *Țara Moșilor* made by the film director Paul Călinescu, who received the prize for the best documentary at the Venice Film Festival in 1939, summarizes in 10 minutes the life of the inhabitants of the West Carpathian Mountains. It was the ideal cultural propaganda material compatible to be broadcast in cinemas before the actual films, so with maximum impact among the population where it was broadcast. Hence the concerns of the Hungarian legation in Rome and the irritate reactions of the Hungarian legations everywhere in the countries where it was broadcast.²⁶

The historian Camil Mureșan wrote about the *ethnic conformism*, consisting in the identification of a specific national and rural mysticism that made rural, archaic traditions and orthodoxy *the one and only reality* of the Romanian people.²⁷ The exacerbation of Byzantine-Orthodox traditions, respectively with the clamor of a certain Western “spiritual degeneration” that should not “contaminate the national spirit” can be also noticed at the adepts of *Ethnic culturalism*. Although, as a rule, the interwar authorities (*The press department, The Press and Propaganda* department within the MAS and the latter the *Ministry of Propaganda*) based the external cultural representation of Romania on the trinomial rather difficult to understand in the West (*Latinity-Orthodoxy-Ruralism*), the tendency to anchor the national specificity in Orthodoxy sometimes led to counter-reactions such the thesis of rejecting the Latinity of the Romanians and Western cultural models. Nichifor Crainic, Minister of National Propaganda during the period of the Legionary government (1940-1941) considered since 1923 that: *If our deep instincts had their roots in Latinity, we should have chosen Catholicism, because Latinity is Catholic. By choosing Orthodoxy, it means that our deep instincts have their roots in Slavism, Orthodoxy being above all the religion of the Slavic race...*²⁸ *What they call Europeanism is nothing but Frenchism, what they call intellectualism and rationalism is nothing but the abdication of autochthonism.*²⁹ Then he will add: (...) *if the Romanians have a*

²⁵ In the conditions where the ability to innovate is a source of propaganda for Romania and other countries in the area, (with the exception of Czechoslovakia), they also lacked innovative technological products that for the country are a source of external admiration and self-confidence. In this case we use the concept of “culture” in its extended acceptance of material and immaterial values? (gastronomy, technological culture, design, the lifestyle attached to the use of technological products, etc.). Romania did not have a prestigious brand through which users could positively perpetuate the image associated with that brand. In the period we are talking about, “Hungarian salami”, “paprika” or “Tokay” wine were well-known export brands and same can be said about Czechoslovakian “Skoda”. This kind of brands has the advantage of been apolitical. But even here the apolitical approach has its limits as sometimes the state use to intervene with recommendations sometimes doubled by subsidies.

²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMAE) Archive, fond România, file no. 478/f 27-29 (Lucian Blaga to the Press Service).

²⁷ Camil Mureșanu, “Laicism și religiozitate în cultura română interbelică”, in *Anuar Historica* 2002/23, “Gheorghe Bari?” History Institute, Cluj Napoca, 2002, available at <https://old.historica-cluj.ro/anuare/AnuarHistorica2002/23.htm>, accessed at 5 September 2024.

²⁸ Nichifor Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în haos*, Timpul Publishing House, Iași, 1996, p. 88.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

European mission to fulfill, it consists in reawakening Byzantineism to a new life (...).³⁰ The term "European Mission" often encountered in the interwar times and in this case at Nichifor Crainic involves enriching the Western European culture with the long-lost and forgotten oriental/East European dimension, or this could be done by exacerbating the Byzantine cultural heritage and Orthodoxy, respectively rejecting imported formulas. More discreet, less known and visible in the debates in the media frontline but no less tenacious was the group of Transylvanian intellectuals of Greek-Catholic denomination (Ion Agârbiceanu for example) and their publications such as "Cultura Creștină" which emphasized the importance of *Eastern Latinity* and the compatibility between Byzantine and Western spirituality represented by Catholicism.³¹

Probable the *Ethnic culturalism* was less obsessed about the image in the eyes of Western Europe. It has deep rooted intellectual origins coming from the previous century, an entire intellectual layer little acknowledged nowadays as far as this debate is concerned. For the national poet and publicist Mihai Eminescu the rusticism was not backwardness. For Eminescu it meant the expression of a (...) *a discrete and settled nation*³² with its own rhythm of evolution, which does not necessarily have to be consonant or a term of comparison with the rhythm of the West.

To be Orthodox and Latin at the same time in the case of Romanians, Slavic and Catholic, in the case of Poles, respectively Turanic and Western European in the case of Hungarians, and to coherently represent this image in cultural propaganda actions or as a national brand has always been a challenge. The situation becomes even more complex if we add what Sorin Antohi called "Geocultural Bovarism", by which the Romanian elites indulged (and still indulge today) in imagining themselves as neighbors of France and not of Bulgaria, Serbia or Ukraine.³³ Antohi's reasoning started from a speech by Nicolae Iorga from 1940 in which he explained why Romania would not be a Balkan country.³⁴ A country

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p138.

³¹ Camil Mureșanu, *op. cit.*

³² George Panu *Amintiri de la Junimea din Iași*, Polirom, Iași, 2013, p. 104.

³³ Sorin Antohi, "Romania and the Balkans. From geocultural bovarism to ethnic ontology", in *Tr@nsit online*, no. 21/2002, <https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/romania-and-the-balkans>, accessed at 14 May 2024.

³⁴ Regarding the construction of modern identity, for the representatives of the Romanian national movement it was important to associate the Romanians with Europe and the separation from the East and the Balkans. If and to what extent it was successful, it is difficult to say. Laurențiu Vlad, who analyzed Romanian participation in the 19th century universal exhibitions, speaks of an evolution, at first a certain doubt and understanding towards a new and exotic participation of the *new nation with one foot in Europe and the other in the East*, later on speaking of "France of the East", "France of the Danube" or "Belgium from the East", in other words part of Europe, even if Eastern Europe, at the Gates of the Orient (Laurențiu Vlad, *Images of national identity: Romania at the universal and international exhibitions in Paris, 1867-1937*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 64-79). We would be a bit more skeptical about the existence of a Romanian image or brand in 19th century Europe, especially when the image in the foreign press was heavily subsidized and not infrequently the articles were written based on materials sent by Bucharest. Whether or not the articles cited by the mentioned author were subsidized by the Romanians remains an open question that future research will probably clarify.

does not belong so much to the geographical space where it is *de facto*, but especially to the geo-cultural space to which it aspires.³⁵ Probably the *Geo-cultural Bovarism* worked as well in the case of the Bulgarians who wanted to be neighbors of Germany. The idea seems to be more widespread than we might expect.³⁶ The Spanish writer Eugenio Montes in *Arriba* of April 24, 1944, wrote an article entitled *Fidelity to Trajan*, it begins with a portrait of the emperor Trajan, considered by him to be the most important sovereign of antiquity, to continue with the remark (...) *one of the most important creations of Trajan is Romania*.³⁷ Although he considered that, the ethnic substance of the Romanians is rather Slavic, they voluntarily separated themselves from them, aspiring to be Latin... (...) *because Latin is not a race or a product of nature. It is a vocation, a culture and Romania remained faithful to this vocation*.³⁸ What are the considerations that led Montes to discern the typology of the “ethnic substance of the Romanians”, he does not mention.

Unavoidably the *geocultural bovarism* characterizing the cultural propaganda materials and representation went hand in hand with the lack of awareness regarding the regional identities, the elements shared by the Romanian culture with the culture of the neighbors (Bulgarians, Serbs, Ukrainians, Hungarians). Regional identities involve *regional solidarities* some of them considered dangerous for the newly formed or expanded national states in the post-1918 period as often these regional solidarities were trans-border regional identities following the former multinational empires Austrian, Ottoman, Tsarist, or preexistent various political realities.

Also, in the cultural propaganda materials, the national state is presented in its current form as if it had always existed (from Neolithic to the present), the previously existing political structures being predecessors of the current formula. This approach is not to be blamed from a pedagogical perspective as a community needs an identity to ensure its cohesion, and one of the dimensions of this identity is the common past. The construction of this identity inevitably calls on founding myths and *ethnoscipism*. For the Eastern European nations, a cultural propaganda in which the main historical milestones were “relativized” was unthinkable as

³⁵ Nicolae Iorga, *Ce este sud-estul european. Conferință ținută pentru Institutul Sud-Est European*, Bucharest, 1940, p. 14.

³⁶ The binary cultural and political cartography of Europe did not wait for the *Iron Curtain* to insert itself into the mentality and implicitly the collective memory (a Catholic or Protestant Western Europe and an Orthodox Christian Eastern Europe). The perspective of post-Cold War “civilization conflicts” and the competition of Central and Eastern European countries after 1990 to be accepted into the Euro-Atlantic structure, has amplified even more the importance of belonging to one cultural block or another. *Pre-war WWI*, and *post-89* Romanian cultural diplomacy strove to attach the country to the West as close as possible, and as far as possible from the Balkans and the East associated with instability. After 1990 the “select” Vișegrad Group through which the Central European nations separated from the East and in which Romania was not accepted is a good example in this sense. Consequently, the symbolic mapping of Europe was and is important not only for national pride but also for political decisions, decisions to make investments, all image related aspects indisputably important then as now.

³⁷ Aron Cotruș, *Raport de presă din Madrid* quoted by Alexandru Ruja, *Aron Cotruș-Viața și Opera*, Editura de Vest – Timișoara Publishing House, 1996, pp. 27-29.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

they imply a certain debate and “negotiation” with the various cultural identity issues. Such a debate implies a certain emotional detachment from the past, and this detachment required post-industrial, post-national realities which were impossible to meet at the time or even today.

Conclusions

Unavoidably choosing “Ethnic culturalism” in the cultural representation imply (in general) a certain amount of modesty in representation. We were pleasantly surprised to note for the interwar Romanian cultural propaganda materials, in general, the absence of arrogance which is often detectable in the case of Hungarian propaganda where the central theme at the time was the emphasis on cultural and *civilizational superiority*. As in the case of other countries in the area, the Romanians at the time appear in search of answers to questions such as: *What does it mean to be Romanian? How they are seen in the great capitals of Western Europe. What cultural specificities or levels of identity characterize the Romanians and how can they be represented to the external public?* The language of cultural representation and the representation formulas as well had to be made more accessible considering that after WWI the generalization of universal suffrage made the opinion of the public and not only of the elites important. A coherent program of cultural representation of the new nation was even more important considering that the Romanians did not have a relevant diaspora and for instance the Romanians did not have an *image* as such at the level of the ordinary citizen in the Western capitals. They were not on the mental map of Europe and the country did not represent a relevant tourist destination. The few mentions in *National Geographic*, *Illustration* or other magazines read in Western Europe or US were often the work of professional travelers sponsored as such.³⁹

Beyond criticism, it can be said in perspective that Romanian cultural representation using “Ethnic culturalism” at the time has managed honorably. It was based on the achievements of a thin layer of Romanian intellectuals from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century who managed to create a high culture in a few decades using not only import formulas but mainly formulas and forms inspired by the autochthonous traditional culture. *The Ballad of Ciprian Porumbescu*, *The Romanian Rhapsody* of George Enescu, *The Neo-Romanian style* in architecture or the sculptures of Costantin Brâncuși are relevant examples.

³⁹ Some Romanian diplomatic reports note how some of the few tourists or foreign journalists in interwar Romania were quickly attracted by the Hungarian aristocrats who treat them well, owning hunting domains and castles. As a result some of these people sometimes even journalists invited and sponsored by Romanian authorities end up joining the Hungarian cause. Due to the fact that many cities in Transylvania were at the time still predominantly Hungarian, motivate the Press Department within the MAS to recommend a discreet guidance of foreign visitors on routes predominantly inhabited by Romanians (source: Central National Archive, *Fond Ministry of National Propaganda – Studii și Documentare*), vol. 475.

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