

Serbian/Yugoslav-Romanian Relations and Interactions in the 20th Century

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Romanian-Yugoslav Cultural Relations in the Period 1945–1948¹

Abstract: In the aftermath of the Second World War, when political, economic and cultural ties between Romania and Yugoslavia were interrupted, the new geopolitical context practically imposed the resumption of relations on all levels, even if the old contentious issues had not been resolved. Despite the fact that past dissensions were still dividing the two nations, the new communist political authorities tried to project a future built on the fragile pillars of political and ideological affinity. Cultural relations, which are usually vectors of political rapprochement, were, in the case of the Romanian-Yugoslav relationship, fully dependent on political initiative and openness. Although throughout this period both countries took steps to set up cultural associations, resume the activities of schools and churches or sign the cultural convention, the time was too short for these initiatives to produce the necessary effects.

Keywords: cultural relations, communist regime, propaganda, school system, church administration, The Cultural Union of Romanians, Cultural Convention

The fact that Romania and Yugoslavia took opposite political and military sides during the Second World War, the dissatisfaction of the Yugoslav leadership with the stance Antonescu's government had taken in the spring of 1941, when the attack against Yugoslavia was initiated from the Romanian territory, as well as the end-of-war crises caused by border conflicts and attempts to re-establish the common border, brought all endeavours towards cultural collaboration to a sudden stop and exacerbated mutual negative perceptions. Furthermore, until the spring of 1946, diplomatic relations between Romania and Yugoslavia were interrupted, so that there were no official channels of communication, designated officials or institutions to deal with possible issues. On 1 March

¹ This work was funded by the Grant for the Financing of Scientific Research in Universities, offered by the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, 2024.

1946, when he took up his ambassadorship, Tudor Vianu described the state of cultural relations between the two states in few, but very suggestive terms: „Romanian-Yugoslav cultural relations are currently in a primitive stage [...] Their future development depends, without any doubt, on the consolidation of mutual political trust”.² It has to be said that the desire for cultural collaboration was mutual, as both Romania and Yugoslavia had minorities across their borders whose identity needed protection, with both countries in need for tools to shape public opinion in order to mitigate the deeply rooted reciprocal distrust. To this end, the Romanian embassy organized a Press Service, coordinated by Ion Frunzetti, with responsibilities in the field of culture and propaganda, whereas shortly after the resumption of diplomatic relations, the Yugoslav government expressed its willingness to deepen and expand cultural ties. In a note to the Romanian Embassy, the Belgrade government requested that the Yugoslav Committee for Culture and Fine Arts be informed of all cultural and artistic activities in Romania, reciprocal visits, exchange of books, periodicals, etc.; they also required that a political structure be designated with which they could remain in contact in order to receive relevant information³ about these issues.

However, the political will to bring cultural relations back to their normal track, the reopening of the embassy, the organization of the Press Service and the pressure from the Romanian diplomatic representatives in the Yugoslav capital turned out to be insufficient. As a clear strategy from Bucharest and proper funding were lacking, all these endeavours remained mere projects for a while. In September 1946, six months after diplomatic relations were reestablished, Ion Frunzetti offered a rather bleak assessment of Romania’s cultural and propaganda efforts in the neighboring country. He began by outlining the potential roles and objectives of such activities, displaying a strong grasp of both his responsibilities and the realities of the time. He made it clear to the Ministry of Information that the functioning of the Press and Propaganda Service had to take into account the very purpose of its mission: to inform Romania about the country in which it operates and to provide information about Romania. Propaganda activities could make use of the written press and radio, by introducing Romanian themes and topics into regular broadcasts, by monitoring and coordinating broadcasts and newspaper articles in the direction desired by the government in Bucharest, creating special broadcasts in Romanian, or producing documentaries and reports. The propaganda campaign could also use the services of the Cultural Department to translate Romanian books and brochures, to organize various exchanges of artists, etc.⁴

² Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (AMAE), Fond Problema 20/1945, Iugoslavia, vol. 3, 1945, 79.

³ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 27, 1946, 53.

⁴ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/197, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România, noiembrie-decembrie 1947, Ion Frunzetti’s letter to the Ministry of Information, September 21, 1947.

Of this series of activities, which could have given a sense of coherence and continuity to cultural exchanges and the dissemination of propaganda materials, very few had been carried out prior to September 1, 1946. Frunzetti blamed it on insufficient funding and understaffing. The daily news bulletins in Romanian were delivered by Aleksandar Nikolić, a graduate of the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest and a native of Macedonia. Frunzetti was in charge of reading the foreign press and newsletters in French and English, as well as maintaining personal contact with Yugoslav and foreign journalists. He paid for the translation of embassy newsletters into Serbian from his own money, at a rate charged by Belgrade publishers, between 800 and 1200 dinars. The person who carried out this service also typed 8–12 copies of the bulletins, which was totally insufficient for the information needs of the time. Frunzetti also paid subscriptions to Yugoslav newspapers in order to follow articles of interest. The Yugoslav radio station's proposal to air a biweekly one-hour program featuring music and news in Serbian about Romania ultimately never came to fruition because of the lack of necessary materials.⁵ Nor was the connection with Bucharest any better. More than a year after the end of the war, the telephone connection was precarious and the telegraph connection only sporadic.

In spite of all these challenges, Frunzetti undertook the translation of an anthology of „progressive” Romanian poetry selected by Ion Caraion, as part of a systematic translation program developed in collaboration with the Yugoslav Committee for Culture and Arts. The Cultural Secretary of the Romanian Embassy made specific requirements for improved telephone and telegraph links, for articles about Romania to be sent on a regular basis, for the allocation of necessary funding and the approval of the request formulated by the Yugoslav publishing house to publish three Romanian novels.⁶ Both the activity of the embassy and the strategies developed in Bucharest had, therefore, to consider the need to disseminate cultural products among a Yugoslav population that was sceptical or even hostile towards Romania, with the aim of altering the unfavourable image of the neighbouring country and legitimize a regime that was abusively brought to power. Moreover, equal efforts had to be directed towards the Romanian community living in Yugoslavia, whose needs related to the preservation of the language and cultural particularities, as well as the development of the schooling and ecclesiastical systems.

Legal regulations

In Romania, until the full establishment of the communist regime and the change of legislation, old bilateral agreements from the inter-war period remained in force, as was the case with the Convention on Educa-

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* The three writers proposed by Ion Frunzetti were Mihail Sadoveanu, Geo Bogza and Eusebiu Camilar.

tion of 1933.⁷ According to this document, Serbian-Croatian primary schools in Romania, with Serbian-Croatian teaching, and Romanian primary schools in Yugoslavia, with Romanian teaching, were considered state public schools. From the third year, pupils also learned the languages of the countries in which they lived. The teachers of minority schools in the Romanian Banat and the Yugoslav Banat had to have the same religion and speak the same language as the pupils they taught, and had to hold Yugoslav, respectively Romanian citizenship. The two governments undertook to train a number of qualified teachers, and until the establishment of their own teaching body, the vacant positions in the Yugoslav Banat could be occupied by Yugoslav subjects who graduated from Pedagogical Institutes in Romania and vice versa. In order to train the teaching staff, the two states undertook to maintain Pedagogical Institutes in Vršac and Timișoara. They also undertook to publish textbooks for the two minorities; in case textbooks were not available, they could also use textbooks published in Romania and Yugoslavia respectively, authorized by the specialized ministries.

The Yugoslav Constitution of 1946 guaranteed cultural development and the free use of language for all minorities. This particular aspect led Cristea Sandu Timoc, one of the Romanian leaders, to state in a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that: „The status of minorities is much more democratic than in the past”.⁸ Although domestic legislation mentioned as minorities only the Hungarians, Macedonians (of Bulgarian dialect), Slovaks, Russians, Albanians, Italians and Bosnian Muslims, Romanians were also benefitting from the cultural institutions that made the object of the Convention on Education of 1933. The only communities without a school or church in their mother tongue were the Macedonian Romanians and the Romanians from the Timok Valley.⁹ The issue of the Romanians from the Timok Valley¹⁰ was never officially addressed by the Serbian authorities, as they were not considered Romanian ethnics.¹¹ Mo-

⁷ The new constitution of the People's Republic of Romania was adopted in 1948 and all internal acts, including those relating to the functioning of minority schools and churches, were revised accordingly.

⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 210/1947, Iugoslavia, Politica internă, 1947, Cristea Sandu Timoc's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 11, 1946.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ The exact number of Timorese Romanians is difficult to establish in the absence of official records. An article entitled „Vlahii din județul Timoc” [The Vlachs from Timok County] by the teacher and MP Petar Mundrici indicated that of the 229 settlements in Timok County, 135 were inhabited by Serbs, 85 by Vlachs and 9 were mixed. Of the total of 294,915 inhabitants of the area, 157,593 were Serb ethnics and 137,322 were Vlachs (46.6%) - see Stelian Brezeanu, Gheorghe Zbucnea (eds.), *Românii de la sud de Dunăre. Documente*, (București: 1997), 351.

¹¹ In May 1945, a group of Romanian leaders from Timok addressed a memo to Tito, in which they stated that the Romanians or Vlachs were of the same ethnicity. They demanded that

reover, at one of the meetings organized by the Romanians' Cultural Union in Pančevo, Tudor Vianu asked Kosta Grubačić about the possibility that the Yugoslav state would give the right to establish schools to the Romanians from Timok. The Undersecretary of State for Education replied that there were no Romanians in the area, as their Vlach language had more in common with Serbian rather than Romanian.¹² Valentin Chelaru, a Romanian language lecturer in Zagreb, also noted that although the legislation on minorities was a step forward, in reality the treatment of minorities was still rooted in „the mentality of the past”.¹³

The school system

In 1948, official statistics based on linguistic criteria indicated that a total of 44,115 Romanian citizens, speakers of „Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian”, lived on the Romanian territory. In Arad County there were 1,569 Serbian-Croatian-Slovenians, in Timiș Torontal County there were 28,031, in Caraș County 12,785 and in Severin County 17,301. The localities with a higher number of Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian speakers were: Turnu (Arad County) - 184, Ciacova - 217, Giera - 281, Dejan - 181, Denta - 577, Bata - 108, Soca - 907, Sângeorge - 443, Dinaș - 1427, Foeni - 423, Gad - 433, Ivanda - 672, Rudna - 942, Sânmartinul Sărbesc - 1,460, Cenei - 1,332, Checea - 653, Saravale - 803, Satu Mare - 763, Sânpetru Mare - 1,689, Variaș - 1,547, Cralovăț - 625, Petrovaselo - 760, Recaș - 545, Stanciova - 849, Cenadul Mare - 1,143, Becicherecul Mic - 387, Pața - 200, Gelu - 1052, Mănăștur - 111, Satchinez - 142 (Timiș Torontal County), Tiro - 205, Belobreșca - 1,497, Câmpia - 703, Moldova Veche - 2,428, Pojejena de Sus - 475, Socol - 1,294, Zlatița - 760, Carașova - 3,233, Lupac - 2,153 (Caraș County), Svinița - 1425 (Severin County).¹⁴

There were 64 Serbian primary schools in the area, with 103 ethnic Serb teachers, only 50 of whom were certified. The old textbooks were outdated from a political viewpoint, so the schools operated without the necessary teaching materials. There were no kindergartens and the high school in Timișoara did not have its own premises. The high school had

children should be taught in their mother tongue by Vlach teachers, that church services should be conducted in their mother tongue and that there should be priests and teachers in every Romanian-populated locality - see Gheorghe Zbucnea, Cezar Dobre, *Românii timoceni. Destin istoric și documente*, (București: 2005), 52.

¹² AMAE, Fond Problema 210/1947, Iugoslavia, Politica internă, 1947, Cristea Sandu Timoc's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 11, 1946.

¹³ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1945, Iugoslavia, vol. 10, 1945, 72.

¹⁴ Arhivele Naționale ale României [National Archives of Romania] (ANR), Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri (1925–1958), file 1794, 1947, 2–5. In 1948, the number of Serbian-Croatian speakers was lower than the one recorded in the 1930 census, namely 0 47,724 inhabitants.

285 pupils and 11 teachers, five of whom were Romanian citizens paid by the Romanian state and six Yugoslav citizens paid by Yugoslavia.¹⁵ In November 1945, the Yugoslav state sent about 600 textbooks to Romania for the educational establishments,¹⁶ which proved to be insufficient and did not pass the „political correctness test” before the Romanian authorities, which actually rendered them impossible to use.

In compliance with the Convention on Education of 1933, the Romanian authorities decided, at the beginning of 1946, to include in the general budget all the necessary costs for Yugoslav education in Romania for the school year 1946/1947. The Ministry of National Education noted that there were not enough operational primary schools in Banat, yet this state of facts was blamed on the consequences of the war, during which many buildings had been destroyed. Around the same period, the Ministry also noted that although there was a Pedagogical Institute in Timișoara which could train Serbian teachers, most of the students opted for theoretical studies. Thus, there were 200 students at the Serbian section of Constantin Diaconovici Loga High School, whereas only 20 students attended the Pedagogical Institute.¹⁷

Based on the same Convention on Education, in December 1945, in the Yugoslav Banat there functioned 74 primary schools with 45 teachers and 3,862 students, a high school in Vršac with 278 students and a Pedagogical Section with 53 students.¹⁸ The Yugoslav authorities took a series of measures to have school buildings repaired, but some of the schools remained closed due to lack of staff and money. In some villages, teaching duties in the Romanian schools were fulfilled by Serbian teachers who taught in Serbian. The money sent for Romanian teachers from the homeland was insufficient, mainly because of the unfavourable currency exchange rate, while the Macedonian-Romanians were not officially recognized as a minority and were thus denied the right to have their own schools.¹⁹

In the fall of 1945, the issue of Romanian political representation was addressed during the elections for the Constituent Assembly. The candidates were: Traian Florea - president of the Cultural Union of Romanians from Banat, Coriolan Lupșici - a lawyer from Pančevo, secretary of the Union, Ion Petroane - a peasant from Mesić, Aurel Trifu - a teacher from Nicolinci and Ilie Vinu - a peasant from Kuštilj (Coștei). The three elected Romanian deputies were Florea, Lupșici and Petroane.²⁰

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ Arhivele Naționale ale României Timiș [National Archives of Romania Timiș] (ANRT), Fond UACDS Timiș, file 4, 1945, 270.

¹⁷ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 27, 1946, 1.

¹⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1945, Iugoslavia, vol. 10, 1945, 72.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ AMAE, Fond Problema 210/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 21, 1946, 21.

The functioning of the Romanian schools was jeopardized in the aftermath of the war as school buildings had been destroyed, schools in Banat were closed when partisan troops came to control the area²¹ and also because the relatively late appointment, in September 1945, of a Technical School Advisor for Romanian education in Yugoslavia, who was able to supervise and stimulate the reopening of the schools. Furthermore, the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries before March 1946 not only blocked the transfer of funds allocated by Romania but also made any dialogue with the Yugoslav authorities impossible. Even after September 1945, Octavian Ruleanu, the technical school advisor, was unable to travel to the territory, as he did not receive the approval of the Yugoslav authorities, and the money for boarding schools and Romanian teachers in the Yugoslav Banat, although allocated in the budget, did not reach Yugoslavia even after the resumption of diplomatic relations, the Romanian authorities being responsible for this failure.²²

The complex process of the communist takeover of power, which led to the postponement of certain decisions or administrative incoherence, the lack of means of communication between Romanians in the Yugoslav Banat and the Romanian authorities, and the arbitrary decisions and actions of the local civil and military authorities caused further problems in the period 1945–1946 and were responsible for a lot of misinformation. Romanian teachers who returned to the country in the fall of 1945 claimed that the Yugoslav authorities had arrested many Romanian intellectuals in order to make them all leave the country, which created tension and led to the refusal of diplomatic personnel to travel to Romanian schools in Banat. A report of the Romanian General Staff, however, indicated that the information was exaggerated and that only four priests and teachers were detained in the Yugoslav camps.²³

In the Timok area, Cristea Sandu Timoc worked intensely for the organization of Romanian-language schools, his efforts being more significant than those made by the Romanian authorities through official channels. Between July and September 1945, he distributed about 2,500 leaflets in Romanian and Serbian at various markets and fairs, advocating for the need for Romanian priests and teachers in Romanian churches and schools. He also wrote a letter to the local authorities requesting the establishment of schools and churches and founded a Romanian bi-monthly gazette in Zaječar (Zaicear), *Vorba noastră*.²⁴ In December 1946, Sandu Timoc sent an extensive report to Gheorghe Tătărescu, pointing to the difficulties faced by the Romanians in Macedonia and the Timok Valley. He

²¹ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1945, Iugoslavia, vol. 10, 1945, 10.

²² AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 27, 1946, 4.

²³ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1945, Iugoslavia, vol. 10, 1945, 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

mentioned that the only nationalities in Yugoslavia that did not enjoy the right to school and church service in their mother tongue were the Romanians from Macedonia and the Timok Valley. Cristea Sandu argued that „defending the ethnic identity of the Romanians from the Timok Valley was the Romanian government’s duty and could be approached in two ways: 1) through direct friendly negotiations with the Yugoslav government and 2) through the mediation of the USSR, as they would understand that Romania’s interests were perfectly justified”.²⁵

The situation of Romanian schools in Macedonia was equally challenging in 1945. In the Bitola region there functioned 12 Albanian schools with 60 students in total and 10 Turkish schools with 1,000 students, yet no Romanian school. Emil Oprișanu (a former consul in the Balkans) required the government in Bucharest to intervene to get the schools in the area reopened, based on the old Romanian state subsidy entitlement, and to send teaching staff and materials from the country. This would have made it possible to reopen schools in Bitola, Skopje, Kruševo (Crușova), Gopeš (Gopeș), Ohrid, Muloviš etc.²⁶

The problems of Romanian schools continued throughout 1946. Romanians from Banat addressed several complaints to the representatives of the Romanian state about the lack of teaching material in the schools and the lack of qualified staff for the High School and the Pedagogical Institute in Vršac.²⁷ Of the 12 teachers who had taught in 1945 at the two institutions, only four were left, the rest of the staff being substitute teachers.²⁸ The situation of the Romanians in Macedonia and the Timok Valley did not change either. At the end of 1946, their schools and churches were still closed.²⁹ The Yugoslav state remained consistent in its decision not to allow educational institutions to function for a population that they did not acknowledge as a minority. In 1946, 3,887 children were enrolled in 74 primary schools in Banat. At the high school in Vršac there were 409 students (secondary and high school), and 79 students were attending the Pedagogical Institute section.³⁰

The resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the allocation of funding for schools in Banat by the Romanian state and greater domestic political and legislative stability in Yugoslavia had immediate effects on the educational institutions attended by Romanian students, without, however, overcoming all existing difficulties. In 1947, the number of students started to increase. In the Vojvodina area there

²⁵ Brezeanu, Zbucea (eds.), *Românii de la sud de Dunăre*, 348.

²⁶ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1945, Iugoslavia, vol. 10, 1945, 60.

²⁷ AMAE, Fond Problema 210/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 21, 1946, 2.

²⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 30, 1946, 11.

²⁹ AMAE, Fond Problema 210/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 21, 1946, 2.

³⁰ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 30, 1946, 11.

were 36 primary schools with 3,563 students and six kindergartens with 306 children.³¹ The high school in Vršac operated parallel sections for all high school classes, which totalled a number of 465 students, whereas the first Romanian teachers were graduating from the Pedagogical Institute.³² In 1947, the first syllabus for schools with Romanian as the language of instruction was introduced, which provided for secondary school examinations in Romanian language and literature and Romanian history. The issue of textbooks, however, remained unresolved. They were insufficient and outdated and therefore unusable in the new political and ideological context. The director of the boarding school in Vršac actually asked the Ministry of National Education at the time to send at least 50 textbooks on Romanian History, Romanian grammar and Romanian language and literature.³³

The cultural issues of the Romanian communities in the Timok Valley, Yugoslav Macedonia and Istria remained unresolved until the deterioration of diplomatic relations in 1948. The visit of the Romanian government delegation to Belgrade in June 1947 was an opportunity for the leaders of these communities to petition Deputy Prime Minister Gheorghe Tătărescu. The Romanians from the Timok Valley called for the opening of schools and churches, required Romanian publications, easier access to passports for young people so they could continue their studies in Romania, the training of teachers and the extension of the 1933 Convention on Education to the Romanians from the Timok area.³⁴ The Romanians in Yugoslav Macedonia also had a series of demands, some of which were in line with those expressed by the Romanian community in the Timok Valley. They presented Tătărescu with demands regarding the need for elementary schools, a high school for boys and a pedagogical institute for girls, as well as the right to print or receive publications from Romania. They also demanded that primary school graduates be able to attend the high school and the pedagogical institute in Vršac, and primary and high school teachers be sent from Romania until a local teaching elite was formed. Their list of requirements also included greater mobility for studies in Romania, teaching in the Romanian dialect and the Romanian language in primary schools and the use of Romanian in high school teaching. The opening of schools in Gorna Belica, Bitola, Kočani, Kruševo, Gopeš, Huma, Malovište, Ohrid, and Skopje was also explicitly demanded.³⁵

³¹ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1947, Iugoslavia, Relații cu România, aprilie-mai 1947, Extract from „Radio Belgrad”, no. 38, year III, March 1–15, 1947.

³² AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. 57, 1947, 32.

³³ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1946, Iugoslavia, Relații cu România, aprilie-mai 1947, Letter of the Service for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to the Ministry of National Education, May 2, 1947.

³⁴ AMAE, Fond Problema 210/1947, Iugoslavia, Politica internă, 1947, Memo of the Romanian minority in Craina-Timok, June 6, 1947.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Memo of the Romanian minority in Yugoslav Macedonia, June 6, 1947.

Although rather absent from statistics and barely mentioned by authorities and passive in relation to the Yugoslav authorities, the Romanian elite in Istria became active in the context of Gh. Tătărescu's visit and presented him with their own list of demands. The Romanian community in Istria did not exceed 3,000 people and was concentrated in the towns of Šušnjevića (Shusnevița) - 402 people, Brdo - 671 people and Jesenovik - 289 people.³⁶ Although they had never had their own churches or schools, the Romanians in Istria managed to preserve their cultural (and mainly linguistic) identity. They demanded that their community of 3,000 Romanians be brought to Romania or, if this was not possible, that they be granted the right to Romanian-language churches and schools and other rights, as also requested by the Romanians from the Timok Valley and Macedonia.³⁷

Right before the diplomatic relations between Romania and Yugoslavia broke, the statistical situation of Romanian schools was as follows: no schools were functioning in Macedonia and the Timok Valley, whereas in Banat there were 39 primary schools in: Alibunar, Kovin, Deliblato, Dobrica, Doljane, Glogonj, Jabuka, Mramorak, Omoljica, Vladimirovac, Novo Selo, Uzdin, Bela Crkva, Grebenac, Jablanca, Mali Žam, Markovac, Margita, Mesić, Nikolinci, Orešac, Malo Središte, Straža, Vlajkovac, Ečka, Torak, Jankov Most, Vojvodinci, Sutjeska, Prigrevica, Sveti Mihajlo, Ritiševo, Vršac, Zrenjanin.³⁸ Alongside these schools, there also functioned the Mixed High School in Vršac and the Pedagogical Institute within the Serbian High School, with a boarding school for boys and one for girls in the same town. The primary school teaching staff consisted of 60 teachers paid by the Yugoslav state, 38 primary school teachers paid by the Romanian state and 45 Romanian primary school teachers who held Yugoslav citizenship and were paid by Yugoslavia. The secondary school teaching staff consisted of 10 teachers paid by the Romanian state and 5 teachers paid by the Yugoslav state. In total, there were 1,500 pupils in Romanian primary schools, 130 in high schools and 140 in pedagogical institutes. The teaching material was provided from Romania, according to the provisions of the 1933 Convention on Education.³⁹

The church administration

In the absence of an inter-state agreement allowing them to function normally, the Romanian and Serbian churches operated on the basis of the inter-war *status quo* and the tacit agreement between both sides.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Memo of the Romanian minority in Istria, June 6, 1947.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1948, Jugoslavia, vol. 115, 1948, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

After the borders were established in 1919, a part of the former eparchy of Vršac (14 municipalities, three monasteries and 14,026 people) remained on Romanian territory, which, by an act of December 7/20, 1919, was entrusted to the administration of the eparchy of Timișoara in the Romanian Kingdom. In 1931, when the Statutes of the Serbian Orthodox Church were adopted, the eparchy of Timișoara within Yugoslavia, together with the Serbian part of the eparchy of Vršac formed the Diocese of Banat, with its seat in Vršac.⁴⁰

In the context of the consolidation of the Little Entente in 1933, Romania and Yugoslavia tried to regulate the situation of the churches on their territory. On July 2, 1934, in Belgrade, the two parties signed the Convention on the Regime of Romanian Orthodox Churches in the Yugoslav Banat and Romanian Banat, ratified by the government in Bucharest on June 20, 1935.⁴¹ The Romanian Orthodox Church on the territory of the Yugoslav Banat, which belonged to the eparchies of Arad and Caransebeș, and the Serbian Orthodox Church on the Romanian territory, which belonged to the Serbian Orthodox eparchies of Vršac and Timișoara, were each to form autonomous dioceses, under the jurisdiction of a vicar with the rank of bishop, with their seat in Vršac and Timișoara, respectively. Both vicars were subordinate to the Romanian and Serbian Synods respectively. The two supreme bodies appointed representatives to a joint commission to discuss and agree on matters related dogma, sacrament and rite. The vicar was elected by the Eparchial Assembly with the blessing of the Patriarch. The vicar also had to pass a canonical examination before being confirmed by royal decree.⁴² The Eparchial Assembly of the Romanian Church in the Yugoslav Banat consisted of 45 members, two thirds of whom were lay people and one third clergy, with a term of office of six years. Before the theological seminaries were established in Romania and Yugoslavia, the two dioceses could send their candidates to the theological faculties in their mother country. The convention also stipulated that both states would grant subsidies to the two dioceses and that the official language of the Romanian church in Western Banat would be Romanian in the Latin alphabet and that of the Serbian churches in Romania would be Serbian in the Cyrillic alphabet.⁴³ However, the Convention was not implemented, as it was not ratified by Yugoslavia until the early 1970s.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Stevan Bugarski, „Situția de drept a Episcopiei ortodoxe sârbe a Timișoarei” - *Contribuții la istoria ecleziastică a Banatului*, C. Dascălu, Nicolae Bocșan, (Timișoara: Editura David Press Print, 2012), 10.

⁴¹ *Monitorul Oficial*, June 20, 1935, 4444.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 4444–4446.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4447.

⁴⁴ Both the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the legation in Belgrade made numerous representations to the Yugoslav authorities to ratify the convention. But the opposition and

These legislation-related issues were further complicated by the effects of the war. Between 1941 and 1945, most Romanian churches in Yugoslavia were closed and some were even destroyed.⁴⁵ The hardships faced by religious institutions were exacerbated by the effects of the land reform of 1945, which expropriated church lands and forbade priests to collect the annual tax from parish members. Ecclesiastical institutions were left with 10 ha of land for maintenance, with priests having their salaries paid by the diocese. This reform drastically reduced the priests' income and means of subsistence. Represented by the three archpriests of the Romanian Church in the Yugoslav Banat, Cușman Lepădat, Victor Popovici and Gherasim Andrei, they petitioned the Romanian authorities in May 1947.⁴⁶ The priests pointed out to the difficulties faced by the parishes and the fact that their salaries came from Romania with great delays and asked for support from Bucharest in the form of a special payment, separate from the salary they were receiving from the Diocese.⁴⁷

In December 1947, in Yugoslavia there functioned 43 Romanian Orthodox parishes, with 43 priests under the canonical jurisdiction of the dioceses of Arad and Caransebeș. There were also two Greek-Catholic parishes under the jurisdiction of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Lugoj. The church staff was paid by Romania, with salaries equal to those of priests in the country.⁴⁸ Until 1948, when the relations between Romania and Yugoslavia became tense, the problems faced by religious institutions in both countries remained unresolved. Without a framework agreement to regulate their existence, the churches remained „tolerated” institutions, with scarce funding.

The Cultural Union of Romanians from Banat

In May 1945, representatives of the Romanians from Banat among which teachers, priests and students, organized a Congress in Vršac, where they established a cultural organization called the Cultural Union of Romanians from Banat. The Union represented more than just an instrument for the administration and dissemination of Romanian cultural products (books, newspapers, journals etc.). It was a representative body, re-

dissatisfaction of the Serbian Orthodox Church and of the Yugoslav priests in Romania, who, by virtue of the convention, were under the authority of the Romanian Patriarchate, eventually led to the failure of all these attempts to resolve the issue.

⁴⁵ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1945, Iugoslavia, vol. 10, 1945, 15. In November 1945, the church in Bitola was reopened, the service being provided by a priest sent from Romania - see *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁶ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1947, Iugoslavia, Relațiile cu România aprilie-mai 1947, Tudor Vianu's letter to Gh. Tătărescu, May 12, 1947.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. 58, 1947, 128.

cognized by the government in Belgrade, which initiated a dialogue with the Romanian and Yugoslav authorities, ensured the protection of Romanian minorities and organized complex activities pertaining to both culture and propaganda. The Union was even perceived as a form of political organization of the Romanians in the Yugoslav Banat. By June 1947, the Union managed to set up 34 local committees, 22 choirs, 20 amateur theatres and 22 libraries.⁴⁹ In 1947, the president of the organization was Traian Florea, the mayor of Novo Selo, and Ion Marcovicean and Alexandru Marogan worked as secretaries. Romania's representatives in Belgrade claimed that the Union was in fact run by Coriolan Lupșici, a lawyer and sub-prefect in Pančevo.⁵⁰

The Union conducted a prolific activity in various fields. It organized literary circles and edited periodicals that brought Romanians in Serbian Banat closer to the Romanian culture and the relevant local productions. At the beginning of 1947, the Union issued *Libertatea*, an official, weekly newspaper coordinated by Mihail Avramescu, together with the monthly journal *Libertatea literară*. The Union's Literary Circle *Lumina* also issued a monthly magazine with the same name, as well as *Bucuria Pionierilor* (a magazine for children and young readers) and edited *Almanahul Societății Literare a Elevilor Români*.⁵¹ In Romania, the Serbs, supported by the Slavic Anti-Fascist Front,⁵² published the newspaper *Pravda*, whose editors-in-chief were Milan Teodorović⁵³ and Bora Popović. The editorial board included Rada Fenlaciki, Milan Todorović, Laza Adamović, Dobrovoj Jovanović and Ljubomir Ainais.⁵⁴ Another periodical published with the help of the Front was *Omladinska Pravda*.

Some of the actions organized by the Cultural Union enjoyed a large number of participants and were also attended by Romanian and Yugoslav officials. In April 1946, for instance, a song and dance show organized

⁴⁹ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. 57, 1947, 32.

⁵⁰ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. 56, 1947, 80.

⁵¹ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. 5, aprilie-mai 1947, Periodical Publications in Romanian, June 1947.

⁵² The Slavic Anti-Fascist Front, the heir to the Slavic Anti-Fascist Council, was established at the end of 1944. The Front was a political organization, formed at the behest of the communist authorities in Bucharest, who used every opportunity to control the society, regardless of ethnic origin. The first president of the Front was Rada Fenlacichi. It was the Slavic Anti-Fascist Front that organized the Great Assembly of Serbs in Timișoara in May 1945, on the occasion of which the proclamation of the union of Banat with Yugoslavia was planned - see Miodrag Milin, Andrei Milin, *Sârbii din România și relațiile româno-iugoslave. Studii și documente (1944–1949)*, (Timișoara: 2004), 53–54.

⁵³ At the beginning of October 1944, the newspaper was coordinated by Milan Teodorovici together with teacher Liubomir Aivaz and primary school teacher Lazar Adamov - see Andrei Milin, Miodrag Milin, Țvetco Mihailov, *Sârbii din România în vremea comunismului. Arhiva sonoră și memorialul pătimirii*, (Timișoara: 2011), 44.

⁵⁴ ANRT, Fond UACDS Timiș, file 4, 1945, 195.

in Pančevo was attended by members of the Romanian diplomatic mission, Kosta Grubačić - Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Public Instruction and two senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁵

Press and propaganda

The authorities in Bucharest took a series of measures aimed at the organization of Romanian propaganda in Yugoslavia, the dissemination of political and cultural information that would improve bilateral relations and change the rather unfavourable perception the Serbian leadership and population had about their Romanian neighbours, but also at the popularization of literary, musical and folkloric creations among the Romanian population in Yugoslavia. Immediately after the accreditation of Tudor Vianu as ambassador in Belgrade, a Press Service was established under the direction of Ion Frunzetti, which provided the Yugoslav press with daily information about Romania. At the request of the Romanian Embassy, daily broadcasts in Romanian were organized on Radio Belgrade that aired political and cultural reports. The Zaječar radio station would also broadcast in Romanian three times a week.⁵⁶

At the beginning of 1947, Radio Belgrade broadcast two weekly programs in Romanian that had a cultural content.⁵⁷ News from and about Romania was also broadcast in Yugoslavia as part of Radio Belgrade's radio program entitled „The Hour of Slavic and Neighbouring Nations”. In September 1947, however, without giving a clear reason, the station's director changed the content of the program and renamed it „The Hour of Slavic Nations”.⁵⁸ This was certainly a political order, which was the subject of a meeting between representatives of the Romanian embassy and P. Vasiljevic, the director of the radio station, in early October 1947. On this occasion, the two parties discussed the possibilities for wider broadcasting of news and programs about Romania by resuming the extended format of the „Hour of the Slavic Nations” program. Full symmetry could thus be established between Radio Romania's format, entitled „The Hour of Neighbouring Nations”, and the Yugoslav one. Mr. Vasiljevic reassured the Romanian representatives of his efforts to develop cooperation between the two broadcasters and asked for recordings of Romanian music to be sent for this purpose.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ AMAE, Fond Problema 210/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 21, 1946, 1.

⁵⁶ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 27, 1946, 38.

⁵⁷ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. 5, aprilie-mai 1947, Ion Frunzetti's letter to the Ministry of Information, April 14, 1947.

⁵⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 200/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România, august-septembrie 1947, Letter from the Embassy in Belgrade to the Ministry of Information, October 7, 1947.

⁵⁹ AMAE, Fond Problema 200/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România, august-septembrie 1947, Letter from the Embassy in Belgrade to the Ministry of Information, October 7, 1947.

Collaboration between periodicals was equally stimulated by the propaganda institutions in the two countries. In June 1947, the Romanian and Yugoslav governments decided to invite three journalists from each country for a period of 15 days to produce press documentaries in order to provide the general public with information about the political and cultural environment and the natural beauty of both Romania and Yugoslavia, with the aim of combating stereotypes and prejudices and legitimizing the new political regimes. The resulting material was to be published in the central dailies in Bucharest and Belgrade.⁶⁰ In practice, however, this project initiated by the political authorities lacked the desired consistency and could not be put into practice. In June, the newspaper *Scânteia* published news on the Romanian-Yugoslav relations in eight of its issues,⁶¹ yet all the information focused around the visit of the party delegation to Belgrade. In July, the same newspaper published only one article entitled „Romanian-Yugoslav friendship - a guarantee of peace in the Danube valley”,⁶² while in August there was an article related to one of Tito’s statements on the position and role of Yugoslavia at the international level. Unfortunately, documentaries that would stimulate knowledge and could contribute to an improved mutual perception were not forthcoming. The Yugoslav press did not provide much information about Romania either. In addition, there were countless translation and spelling errors in the names of the Romanian institutions and dignitaries: Chivu Stoica’s name was spelled in the Yugoslav newspapers Nivu Stoikar, Ion Vințe’s name was mentioned as Ion Vinos, and instead of Ștefan Voitec the newspapers mentioned Ștefan Noitek.⁶³

Romanian-Yugoslav Association for the Consolidation of Friendship Ties

Following Moscow’s model of setting up associations to strengthen ties between the USSR and the other communist states, Romania and Yugoslavia took their first steps to establish a similar organization in June 1946. It was Romania that took the initiative to set up the Romanian-Yugoslav Association aimed at disseminating cultural products and organizing bilateral cultural, artistic and press-related events that could facilitate the dialogue between the two states and ultimately secure effective

⁶⁰ AMAE, Fond Problema 200/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România, august-septembrie 1947, Letter from the Embassy in Belgrade to the Ministry of Information, June 10, 1947.

⁶¹ *Scânteia*, June 5, 1947; *Scânteia*, June 7, 1947; *Scânteia*, June 8, 1947; *Scânteia*, June 9, 1947; *Scânteia*, June 10, 1947; *Scânteia*, June 11, 1947; *Scânteia*, June 27, 1947; *Scânteia*, June 28, 1947.

⁶² *Scânteia*, July 18, 1947.

⁶³ Constantin Hlihor, *România: relațiile cu vecinii în perioada Războiului Rece. Relațiile României cu Iugoslavia*, (București: Editura Academiei Tehnice Militare, 2015), 14.

propaganda. In June 1946, Ion Frunzetti brought this issue forward for the first time with the Yugoslav ambassador Dane Medaković. Both sides came to the conclusion that the Association was necessary for cooperation between the states, but the Yugoslav government was waiting for the Romanian government to take the first steps and establish the institution in Bucharest. As a result of this discussion, on May 23, 1947⁶⁴ the opening meeting of the Romanian-Yugoslav Association for the Consolidation of Friendship Ties was held under the chairmanship of Ion Pas, Minister of Arts. Florica Bagdasar, Minister of Health, was appointed to head the Association, the Steering Committee also including Mihail Sadoveanu, writer and President of the Assembly of Deputies, Octav Livezeanu, Minister of Information, Ion Pas, Minister of Arts, Miron Nicolescu, mathematician, member of the Romanian Academy and Constantin Daicoviciu, historian and Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Social Insurance and Labour.⁶⁵

However, since the Romanian authorities did not have a real interest in activating the Association and because of the increasing tensions between the two states on various issues (border-related problems, the relations with the Romanian and Serbian minorities, the effects of the agrarian reform etc.), the mutual distrust that became even more obvious with the lack of a bilateral political agreement by the end of 1947, rendered inconsistent any attempts to initiate an organization that would facilitate bilateral relations in the cultural field. In the first four months, the Association did not apply for registration with the Tribunal, did not have a registered office and carried out no activities whatsoever.⁶⁶ The situation of the Romanian-Yugoslav Association proves once again that in the early stages of the communist regime in Bucharest, the dynamics of relations with Yugoslavia depended less on bodies and institutions that militated for the consolidation of friendship ties, whether they were of Soviet inspiration or populated with politicians and public figures, and more on the political decision at the top, which could regulate the challenging issues involved by bilateral relations. The decision of the two communist parties to sign a treaty of friendship between the two states and to orga-

⁶⁴ In Hungary, the Association of Friendship with Yugoslavia had been functioning since 1945, its counterpart in Belgrade being established only two years later, on October 12, 1947 - see AMAE, Fond Problema 200/1947, Iugoslavia, Relații cu România, august-septembrie 1947, Tudor Vianu's letter to Gh. Tătărescu, October 16, 1947.

⁶⁵ AMAE, Fond Problema 200/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România, august-septembrie 1947, Directorate of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Yugoslav Section, N. Popovici, *Referat [Report]*, September 25, 1947; AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România, vol. 5 aprilie-mai 1947, Excerpt from the newspaper *Borba*, May 24, 1947.

⁶⁶ AMAE, Fond Problema 200/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România, august-septembrie 1947, Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Yugoslav Directorate, N. Popovici, *Referat [Report]*, November 25, 1947.

nize Tito's first visit to Romania at the end of 1947 (long after both states had taken similar steps in their relations with other countries of the European communist bloc) consolidated the ties between Bucharest and Belgrade and facilitated the activities of the Association.

A similar Yugoslav association was established on January 8, 1948,⁶⁷ with Minister Nikola Petrović as president. Its vice-presidents were Momčilo Marković, a member of the Executive Committee of the Yugoslav Ploughmen's Front, and Jože Brilej, a director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The association's secretary was M. Stefanović, editor of Tanjug; Coriolan Lupšici (deputy in the Grand National Assembly of Serbia) was appointed counsellor, and the members were Milka Minić - chairman of the Committee for Schools and Science of the P.R. Serbia, Dušan Čalić - deputy chairman of the Planning Commission of the PFRY, Mehmed Hodza - minister of Mines, Nijaz Dizdarević - member of the Central Council of the Yugoslav People's Youth and Jure Kaštelan - a secretary from Zagreb.⁶⁸

The circulation of books

Romanian-Yugoslav academic relations were scarce in the interwar period. It was not until 1943 that the Serbian-Croatian Language Lectorate was set up at the Balkan Research Institute of the University of Bucharest, with a lecturer paid by the Romanian state. In July 1946, as the Romanian authorities had drawn up a plan to resume cultural and scientific relations with neighbouring countries, the Romanian government allocated funds for the establishment of a Romanian language and culture Lectorate at the University of Belgrade. On that occasion, the Ministry of National Education required the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to intervene with the Yugoslav authorities in order to obtain approval for the opening of the Lectorate, which was „useful for the good relations between the two countries and for the training of the teaching staff needed in Romanian schools”.⁶⁹ The lecturer proposed for the new position was Professor Valentin Chelaru, who had held similar positions in Sofia and Zagreb.⁷⁰

The boosting of ties between Romania and Yugoslavia in 1947 is also mirrored by the exchange of books. Aware of the dramatic situation of the University of Belgrade, whose building had been bombed during the war and whose library had lost a significant part of its patrimony, Tudor Vianu launched appeals in the country for donations to rebuild the book collection. This was not merely a gesture of diplomatic courtesy and

⁶⁷ ANR, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale Presa internă, file 1246, 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁹ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 28, 1946, 57.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

an attempt to intensify academic collaboration between the two countries, but also a natural reaction from a writer and philosopher holding a position of great responsibility. Making full use of his high profile and personal connections, Vianu appealed to several educational and cultural institutions in Bucharest to send books. In August 1946, he presented this issue to the Romanian Academy, getting a very prompt response,⁷¹ so that as early as September, the Romanian Embassy received a package of books from the Institute of Universal History in Bucharest.⁷² Among the other donors there were: the Royal Foundation for Literature and Arts, Casa Școalelor, the Balkan Research Institute, the Romanian Social Institute, the Romanian Institute for National History, the Institute for the History of Arts.⁷³ On October 21, 1946, the book collection was handed over in a solemn ceremony held at the Library of the University of Belgrade in the presence of numerous professors and students. Tudor Vianu and Stefan Jakovljević, the rector of the University of Belgrade, delivered speeches.⁷⁴

For cultural and propaganda purposes, books, illustrated cards and music scores or music recordings were sent from Romania on several occasions. They were intended for the Yugoslav authorities and the press, as well as for the Romanian communities to be used in the schools, churches and cultural associations they maintained. In March 1946, the Ministry of National Education sent 12 packages of teaching materials to Romanian schools,⁷⁵ and in April 1946, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers donated 169 packages of books to the Cultural Union.⁷⁶ In September 1947, the Cultural and Press Service of the Romanian Embassy received from Bucharest various materials to be used for protocol actions or to be offered to various Yugoslav institutions. Of these materials we could mention: the booklet *Arta populară românească* [*Romanian Folk Art*] (in French, English and Italian), *Breviarul statistic al României* [*Statistical Breviary of Romania*], vol. II, 1939, the magazine “Comunicări statistice” [“Statistical Reports”] (1945–1947), the magazine *Buletinul Cărții Românești* [“Romanian Books Bulletin”] (1944–1946), the booklet *Romania turistică* [*Touristic Romania*], N. Iorga’s *Istoria românilor* [*The History of Romanians*] (in French), *Revue des études byzantines*, Vladimir Streinu’s *Literatura română contemporană. Antologie* [*Contemporary Romanian Literature. Anthology*] (1943), G. Oprescu’s *Peasant art in Roumanie* (London, 1929), Tiberiu Alexandru’s *Muzica populară bănățeană. Nota mono-*

⁷¹ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 28, 1946, 85.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷³ AMAE, Fond Problema 217/1946, Iugoslavia, vol. 27, 1946, 130.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

grafică [Folk music from Banat. Monographic Note] (1942), etc., together with about 1000 postcards from the country, press files and texts of laws.⁷⁷ The same Service was also sent, in October 1947, materials such as: the brochure *Roumanie, pay de tourisme*, the magazine *România ONT* and leaflets on the Romanian resorts.⁷⁸ In December 1947, the list of materials sent to the Service included photographs, Romanian music records donated by the Romanian Broadcasting Company (music performed by the Radio Orchestra, the Radio Choir, the “Barbu Lăutaru” Popular Orchestra) and the recently issued magazine *Studii*.⁷⁹

Romanian-Yugoslav Cultural Convention

The normalization of the political-diplomatic relations through the reopening of the two embassies, the resolution, even partial, of some contentious issues, such as the attempt to revise the common border in 1945 and the need to collaborate within the communist bloc in the increasingly obvious (for Romania) context of international isolation led to the regulation of various areas of cooperation. As far as the field of culture was concerned, the visit paid by the Romanian delegation visit to Belgrade on June 7–9, 1947 was of crucial importance, as it involved, among other aspects, discussions on this topic. The delegation whose members were Petru Groza, Gheorghe Tătărescu, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, Ștefan Voitec and Emil Botnăraș⁸⁰ decided to form a joint commission to set up the frameworks of economic cooperation and established a common line of conduct at the forthcoming international conference on navigation on the Danube. The two parties discussed the possibility of concluding a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance and decided on the final text of the cultural convention that was to be signed in Bucharest.⁸¹

As a consequence of this decision, a Yugoslav delegation consisting of Vladislav Ribnikar, chairman of the Yugoslav Committee for Arts and Culture, E. Badniević, Minister Plenipotentiary, and Elena Nikolić, secretary of the delegation, arrived in Bucharest by train on June 24, 1947. They were welcomed at the railway station in Mogoșoaia by Octav Live-

⁷⁷ AMAE, Fond Problema 200/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relații cu România august-septembrie 1947, Informative-documentary material sent to the Cultural and Press Service in Belgrade, September 20, 1947.

⁷⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1947, Iugoslavia, vol. Relațiile cu România noiembrie-decembrie 1947, List of tourism-related material sent to the Cultural and Press Service in Belgrade, October 18, 1947.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, N. Popovici's letter to C. Luca, First Press Counselor at the Romanian Legation in Belgrade, December 20, 1947.

⁸⁰ ANR, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale, Presa internă, file 1163, 1947, 80.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

zeanu, Ștefan Voitec, Ion Pas and other officials and diplomats.⁸² On the same day, the Minister of Information held a reception in honour of the guests, attended by Petru Groza, President of the Council of Ministers, Gheorghe Tătărescu, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Ștefan Voitec, Minister of National Education, Octav Livezeanu, Minister of Information, Ion Pas, Minister of Arts, Gheorghe Vântu, Minister of Public Works, Florica Bagdasar, Minister of Health, Romulus Zăroni, Minister of Cooperation, Tudor Vianu, Ambassador in Belgrade, Serghei I. Kavtaradze, Ambassador of the USSR, Dane Medaković, Ambassador of Yugoslavia, D. Ganev, Minister of Bulgaria and other outstanding representatives of the political and cultural life from both Romania and Yugoslavia.⁸³

The Convention was signed in a festive setting at the Romanian Athenaeum on June 26, 1947⁸⁴ by Octav Livezeanu and Vladislav Ribnikar. The Radio Choir performed the two national anthems and offered a short program of Romanian and Yugoslav folk songs. Then, the two officials who signed the convention delivered speeches in which they mentioned the „time-honoured” relations between the two peoples (sic!) and about the broader possibilities that the cultural field opens for collaborations on other levels.⁸⁵ Whereas Ribnikar remained more cautious in his speech in terms of specific statements and value judgments, Livezeanu’s speech alluded to some rather delicate issues regarding the relations within the European communist bloc. The Cultural Convention was perceived by the Romanian minister as a cornerstone, of equal importance with the agreement signed with Bulgaria, aimed at strengthening collaboration in the Balkans. Was Livezeanu aware of the Bulgarian-Yugoslav talks on a Slavic federation in the region? Did he deliberately raise these issues in the presence of Soviet officials, knowing that Moscow disapproved of such a project? Or was it simply a desiderate that turned into a diplomatic blunder? Most likely, Livezeanu intended to show courtesy towards his Yugoslav counterparts without considering the deeper implications of his words. The same diplomatic courtesy, associated with political awkwardness prompted the Romanian minister to continue: „The people in this part of the world have been oppressed for centuries and have made sacrifices for their freedom. This is why these nations are so sensitive when it comes to their liberty, sovereignty and national independence, and why they tend to reject so vehemently any intru-

⁸² *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁴ Before the convention with Yugoslavia, Romania had signed a similar act only with Bulgaria, on May 26, 1947. After the conclusion of the Romanian-Yugoslav convention, the authorities in Bucharest signed similar acts with Czechoslovakia - on September 5, 1947, with Hungary - on November 25, 1947 and with Poland - on February 27, 1948 - see Gheorghe, *Tratatele internaționale ale României 1939-1965*, vol. III, (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983).

⁸⁵ ANR, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale, Presa internă, file 1163, 1947, 36.

sion that threatens this basic attribute”.⁸⁶ The tribute he paid to the Soviet support in consolidating „democracy” in the Balkans was not, in our opinion, sufficient to reduce the effect of his earlier assertions. It was not only a legitimization of the Yugoslav perspective regarding the establishment of the Belgrade regime „by its own forces”, but also an expression of an attitude regarding the relations between Moscow and the rest of the newly installed communist regimes. There is no information available as to whether Livezeanu was endorsed by the Party to make such statements, whether other Romanian representatives were aware of the minister’s intentions or whether he acted on his own. What we know for sure is that there were no political consequences of this speech, as Octav Livezeanu continued to hold important positions in the Party and State leadership until 1949 (he was Minister of Information until December 1947 and subsequently Minister of Arts and Information between April 1948 and May 1949).

The Convention stipulated that both states would provide a favourable climate for the development of joint cultural activities and set up in each country a scientific institute for multilateral research on Romanian and Yugoslav life and culture. It also provided for the establishment of a Joint Commission responsible with the implementation of cultural projects, with a section in Bucharest and another in Belgrade, composed of representatives from the political, diplomatic, cultural and scientific areas appointed by the Committee for Culture and Arts in Yugoslavia and the Ministry of Information in Romania. The objectives of the Joint Commission were the establishment of language, literature, history and geography departments and lecturers, the organization of exchanges of researchers, teachers, pupils and students, the support of young academics and the facilitation of contacts between professional organizations of teachers and between various cultural, academic and scientific bodies. The activity of the Commission also involved the conclusion of a legal agreement regulating matters relating to studies, examinations, scientific degrees, the establishment of a framework for the conduct of mutual scientific activities, the permanent exchange of publications, support for translation activities, the organization of exhibitions, performances, film exchanges, excursions, representation offices, press agencies, etc.⁸⁷

Although the Cultural Convention was an important step forward in Romanian-Yugoslav relations and was presented as a diplomatic success by both parties in an attempt to bridge past differences and provide a fra-

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁷ *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*, 1947 vol. II, (Beograd: Jugoslovenski pregled, 1986), p. 127.

mework for future collaboration, it did not come into force before the break in diplomatic relations. As a consequence of the visible deepening strain in relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia, many of the collaboration processes initiated in 1947 remained unresolved. The time was too short for real rapprochement and the problems too numerous and complex. The cultural agreement was not the only unfruitful approach. The Convention on Education, dating from 1933, was not renewed, and the 1934 Church Convention, which regulated the intricate issue of ecclesiastical organization, the subordination of the churches in Romania and Yugoslavia and their property, was never ratified. Other unresolved issues were the payment of church personnel, restrictions on the entry into Yugoslav territory of religious books in Romanian, the transit of priests across the border, required for contact with the ecclesiastical authorities to which they were canonically dependent, as well as the right to maintain schools with Romanian-language teaching for the Romanian minorities in the Timok Valley and Macedonia.⁸⁸ The rupture of diplomatic relations changed the agenda of both countries, with cultural issues remaining either unresolved for a long time or at the stage where they were at the time of the Cominform Resolution.

⁸⁸ AMAE, Fond Problema 220/1947, Iugoslavia, Relații cu România noiembrie-decembrie 1947, Summary report on the contentious and pending issues between Romania and Yugoslavia.

Summary

On 1 March 1946, when Tudor Vianu took up his ambassadorship, he described the state of cultural relations between Romania and Yugoslavia as being in a „primitive stage”. Between 1945 and 1947, the two states made constant efforts to reopen the schools and churches. In May 1945, representatives of the Romanians from Banat among which teachers, priests and students, organized a Congress in Vršac, where they established a cultural organization called the Cultural Union of Romanians from Banat. The Union represented more than just an instrument for the administration and dissemination of Romanian cultural products (books, newspapers, journals etc.). It was a representative body, recognized by the government in Belgrade, which initiated a dialogue with the Romanian and Yugoslav authorities, ensured the protection of Romanian minorities and organized complex activities pertaining to both culture and propaganda. Following Moscow’s model of setting up various associations to strengthen ties between the USSR and the other communist states, Romania and Yugoslavia took their first steps to establish a similar organization in June 1946. On May 23, 1947 the opening meeting of the Romanian-Yugoslav Association for the Consolidation of Friendship Ties was held under the chairmanship of Ion Pas, Minister of Arts. A similar Yugoslav association was established on January 8, 1948. The Romanian-Yugoslav Cultural Convention was signed in a festive setting at the Romanian Athenaeum on June 26, 1947 by Octav Livezeanu and Vladislav Ribnikar. However, the subsequent severance of diplomatic ties prevented the enforcement of the convention.

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