

BETWEEN THE FRENCH LEGACY AND THE SOVIET IMPERIALISM.
THE ROMANIAN CULTURE IN THE 50S AND ITS INSTRUMENT –
THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR PROMOTING ROMANIAN CULTURE ABROAD

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This article aims to provide a double-layered analyze. On the one hand, it will present and discuss the instruments used by the communist decision-makers in charge with the cultural propaganda, focusing the Romanian Institute for the Cultural Relations Abroad (I.R.R.C.S., Romanian abbreviation). In a second layer of analysis, starting from the institutional framework offered by I.R.R.C.S. and from the symbolic capital employed by this institution on the arena of the international cultural relations, this article aims to discuss two different patterns normally used when it comes to assess the efficiency and the effectiveness of the cultural propaganda, and which one suits the Romanian model better. The first method is strictly quantitative, and measures the activities carried on by institution of cultural propaganda, the numbers of it, the type etc. The second, qualitative method, consists of the analyze of the impact and value that activities really brought on the international arena and what the results of that activities were. The motivation for this topic was based on the fact that although it represented a priority for the totalitarian regime, the cultural propaganda is an understudied field of research within the Romanian historiography of the present time.

Keywords: Cultural propaganda, cultural diplomacy, ideology, foreign cultural exchanges, communism.

The Romanian Institute for the Cultural Relations Abroad (I.R.R.C.S.) was a key-institution of the Romanian foreign propaganda. This article will firstly present the punctual activities this institution used to carry on, and the role it played in the field of cultural relations with the other states. The Romanian cultural diplomacy, a component part of the foreign relations, is intercepted in the post-communist historiography, at least for the period of the immediate post-war years, as an “extension of the Romanian domestic policy”¹, so that any action in the field of foreign Romanian cultural representation bears the mark of the same political-strategic motives of ideological reclusion and less of opening and encouragement of foreign contact.

¹ The evaluation belongs to the minister of Foreign Affairs, Simion Bughici, and was made in a discussion regarding the adoption of the Constitution in 1952. E. Denize, C. Măță, *The communist Romania. State and propaganda (1948–1953)*, Târgoviște, 2005, p. 172.

We think that the importance of such preoccupation is high, even more as the topic has not constituted so far a subject for analysis for a special work regarding the two aspects, the Romanian Institute for the Cultural Relations Abroad itself, as an institution created by the communist regime in Romania, after a Soviet model and with certain propagandistic valences and the role this institute played in the legitimation of the communist leadership. Another object of this work are the means used by I.R.R.C.S. in exporting the image of the country to the foreign auditor and in engaging the intellectuals for purposes of foreign cultural mission work.

As for us, we started from the premise that a significant number of archive documents has not yet been turned to advantage. The purpose of this research is to follow the institutional process of I.R.R.C.S., the extent to which the foreign cultural relations were tightly related to the evolution of the domestic and international policy and if they were or not under the sign of getting close to Moscow, in other words, whether the Romanian cultural diplomacy slipped towards a propagandistic discourse with the purpose of achieving certain immediate political purposes or not. Establishing the degree and the type of I.R.R.C.S. decisional independence, approximated by us as inexistent or relative, determines the extent to which the above indicated working hypothesis becomes valid or not.

Beyond filling a vacuum of knowledge in the Romanian historiography, such analysis has a double utility. First of all, we want to accomplish a zoom of the foreign cultural relations by reconsidering an articulated, functional institution, although limited to the political interferences. Secondly, we consider that it answers with conviction in the sensitive issue of the analysis of the performance framework of the artistic activity subjected to ideologization in the communist regime, by definition an undermining and subordination regime of the cultural autonomy.

After taking over the political power by the Romanian Communist Party, Romania entered the process of Sovietisation, a situation similar to the other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, found under the sphere of the Soviet Union influence. The materialization of Romania's subordination to the Soviet Union manifested not only by what is commonly called the Sovietisation of the entire Romanian society, but also by the apparition of some cultural institutional forms imitating the Soviet ones. The cultural foreign policy in the first stage of the communist regime in Bucharest is characterized by the total obedience to the directions imposed by the Muscovite centre, a fact which inspired some researchers² to sustain that, in the case of Romania, but also of the other satellite states, one may not talk about a strategy of foreign cultural policies not tributary to the ideology and, thus, nor about any instruments supporting and propagating it objectively and directly. In this way, the institutional and human resort articulating Bucharest position in the undertakings of the cultural propaganda during the first post-war years was reduced to that exclusively accepted by the political decisional

² For aspects regarding the control and decisional limitation in the cultural and foreign cultural propaganda field – see C. Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* (The communist cultural policies during Gheorghiu Dej regime), Bucharest, 2011.

factor. The voluntary initiatives were not possible; the ideological canon was strictly followed, and I.R.R.C.S. is the expression of this factual status, but also all the cultural institutions from the studied period. More exactly, in front of the leaders from Bucharest organizing the projections of foreign cultural propaganda, there was a major objective: the creation of key-institutions for the propaganda to serve the regime by the instauration of the monopole over the resources of informing the citizens and, in subsidiary, for the foreign policy, a re-evaluation of the contacts and exchanges with the exterior.

The insecurity of the means of cultural propaganda impregnating the Romanian diplomacy during the first post-war years, was followed, in some of the studied periods, by cultural policies of ideological opening and relaxation. All these rhythms, of profound ideologization followed by an opening to liberal forms of expression, but also the re-evaluation of the foreign relations offers, in fact, the correct diagnosis of the profile of the Romania's representation structures to the exterior, in general, and of I.R.R.C.S. profile, in particular. This thing is magisterially enunciated by the French historian François Furet: "It is not enough that these states be friends of the Soviet Union. It is not even enough for them to be subject to it. They must have the same regime, the same institutions and use the same words in order to mask the same reality. Communism in one country is not capable to export abroad something else but itself".³ For almost half a century, the evolution of these states and of the institutions serving them shall report in an overwhelming percentage to the relations with Moscow. Romania made no exception from this subordination, and I.R.R.C.S. also affiliated to the political requests of that time.

The Soviet model in its Stalinist version, generally accepted as serving also the Romanian state in the period 1948–1958 was also transposed in the field of cultural life, equally subordinated in the institutional and ideological plan to the new regime. The reconfiguration of the Romanian cultural space represented a part of the general process of transformation of the society (collectivization, nationalization, industrialization, first five-year plan), the declared scope of this process being the forced abandonment of a past declared as decadent and the legitimation of future alleged as progressive.⁴ The restructuring of the Romanian Academy, of the educational system, the settlement of creation unions, the rewriting of the Romanian historiography, the abandonment of the traditional cultural currents, shall be elements of subordination and symbols of delimitation from the past.

With small exceptions, the years 1948–1953, the years of tough Stalinism in Romania, the foreign cultural export does not register any notable actions, independent from the political line imprinted to all cultural actions, the techniques of communication in the foreign cultural sector are on the line of a quasi-generalized imitativeness. The next decade witnessed an ideological relaxation at

³ F. Furet, *Trecutul unei iluzii. Eseu despre ideea comunistă în sec. XX* (The passing of an illusion. The idea of communism in the twentieth century), Bucharest, 1996, p. 433 (French edition 1995).

⁴ Mioara Anton, "'Progresiști' versus 'reacționari'. Subordonarea intelectualilor" (Progressitis versus reactionaries. Subordination of intellectuals), in D. Cătănuș (coord.), *Intelectuali români în arhivele comunismului* (The Romanian intellectuals in the archives of communism), Bucharest, 2006, p. 13.

the level of the Romanian foreign policy orientation. On the background of the changes that took place upon Stalin's death and of the events taking place in Hungary in 1956, the cultural product offered abroad becomes less attractive and less open to variation. On the background of the beginning of the international relaxation after 1960, new formulas of foreign representation had to be thought which gave the image of a country assuming its position and value.

In our opinion, at this moment I.R.R.C.S. fails to rise to the importance of the moment opening to it. It is the time when the political regime enunciated new cultural policies, that recognized and eliminated the mistakes or excesses of the past and offered new intellectual resources, but without losing control over them.⁵ The explanations for this maladjustment could be: either I.R.R.C.S. leaders fail to address the *big*, international *culture* and to approach it by the means it expects, or I.R.R.C.S. already failed to present any importance during the first post-war years; its role ended as well as the historical stage ended and the political dissidents lose sight of a relatively important institution.

A particular means for the totalitarian regimes of changing the course of the traditional political-diplomatic relations is to create institutions that support the policy and ideology of a regime in the political, economic and cultural life. Thus, the cultural policy of the Communist Party has, amongst its main objectives, the transformation of the literature and creation in general into a fighting gun which helps the state, and the new functions of the intellectuals are the ideological and political ones, the educational and propaganda ones, but also those of legitimizing the new political regimes.

In the first period taken into consideration by this study, namely the period between 1947–1955, the ideological pressure over the components of the foreign cultural propaganda was the most powerful, aggressive and of such intolerance that went up to the re-evaluation of the forms of foreign diplomacy, so that one takes into consideration the minimization of exposing itself on the international stage and the registration of all cultural initiatives in the Jdanovist cultural orthodoxism. In this period, the action of the Romanian cultural diplomacy highly focused on the countries satellites of Moscow and aimed at the relations among the communist countries in Europe, the cultural effort was excessively minimized and it followed exclusively the ideological line, the promotion of realist-socialist culture and the restriction of foreign exchanges. This thing was provided by I.R.R.C.S. functional Statute, its purpose being that of: “popularizing abroad the cultural, economic and social accomplishments of our regime of popular democracy, the study and populations in R.P.R. of the cultural, economic and social accomplishments of the USSR and of the countries of popular democracy on the road of building socialism”.⁶

⁵ M. Lazăr, “Structuri politice și cultură. Câmpul cultural de la destalinizare la mitul salvării prin cultură”, *Xenopoliana*, VII, 1–2, 1999, p. 171.

⁶ ANIC (The National Archives of Romania – Central Unit, hereinafter ANIC, after the Romanian abbreviation), fund Romanian Institute for the Cultural Relations Abroad (hereinafter fund I.R.R.C.S., after the Romanian abbreviation), structure 1, file no. 5/1949, p. 76.

A period of relative detachment from Moscow pressure followed, a period having an impact also on the promotion of foreign image and on the cultural and diplomatic re-evaluations, by multiplying the contacts and increasing the need of representation in other European countries or from outside of Europe. The changes at the internal level, related to the de-Stalinisation attempts and of reconnection to the traditional Romanian models reflected also in the activity of cultural propaganda sustained by I.R.R.C.S., but a short term process highly related to the directorate of Mihai Ralea, an intellectual figure who imposed a different perspective on I.R.R.C.S. Thus, starting with 1956, the global Congress took place in Romania, dedicated to the anniversary of 2000 years as from poet Ovidiu's birth, with the organization of conferences and sessions of communication in the country and in Italy.⁷ The propaganda activity abroad was carried out under the auspices of some weak signs of liberalization and occidental reorientation occurring on the background of some re-evaluations at the level of I.R.R.C.S. leadership but also following the transformations of political and strategical order which began in the mid-1950s. Together with this Congress dedicated to the Latinity of the Romanian origins, a sign that detachment from the exclusively Soviet influences announced what was called de-Stalinisation and cultural defrost, there were other numerous attempts of getting close to the Occident, namely the discussions regarding the reopening of the French Institute in Bucharest, and of the Romanian School in Rome, the organization of circuits at the National Theatre in France, but also the gradual renunciation to the highly ideologized materials of propaganda and the orientation towards models of propaganda which may find their place in the requirements of the western market. This second stage of historical evolution of the communist regime, starting from 1956, brings a liberalization at the level of the state's cultural policies. The hermetic closure to the exterior was abandoned, allowing the Romanian intellectuals travel abroad or the occidental books have a relatively free circulation in Romania. Moreover, the authorities start being preoccupied by the way our country is culturally perceived abroad. Starting with 1948, I.R.R.C.S., an institute created after V.O.K.S. model (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries/The General Association for USSR Cultural Relations with the Exterior), centralized the cultural propaganda actions in Bucharest according to the policies elaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but especially taking into account the trends set by the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party to which it was formally and informally subject. The former Institute of Universal Culture (a newly emergent institution, consisting of men of culture, mostly left-wing

⁷ ANIC, fund I.R.R.C.S., structure 1, file no. 101/1957; structure II, Italy, file no. 274/1955-1958, passim. Celebrating the Ovidian bimillenary preoccupied the representatives of the Romanian state at the highest level, so that the Council of Ministers issued a *Decision for celebrating two thousand years from the birth of the poet Publius Ovidiu Naso* whereby a National Committee of R.P.R. was established for the anniversary of poet Ovidius. I.R.R.C.S. was represented in this Committee by the president of that date, Mihai Ralea.

sympathisers, managed by the mathematician Dimitrie Pompeiu) would be taken over and urgently transformed at the end of 1947 into I.R.R.C.S.

Romania's image abroad during the communist regime was provided exclusively by the official propaganda channels strictly controlled by the Romanian Communist Party by its Propaganda and Agitation Committee and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These propaganda channels followed the guidelines drawn by the policy makers and, in a small, almost insignificant measure this was accomplished also by traditional means, sustained by the voluntary undertakings of the men of culture, literary men, artists, or independent cultural propagators.

Starting from this premises, it is necessary to understand the dissemination/receipt means and mechanisms of the Romanian culture abroad and of the institute's role, whose primary task was the cultural relationships abroad. The archive funds, those of the former I.R.R.C.S., the current Romanian Cultural Institute found in the custody of the Romanian National Archives, after their delivery in two stages to I.C.R., the funds, less relevant, is true, in this issue, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs present us the existence of an over appreciated institution, as we would say today. And, in order to offer an explanation for this statement, we must start by specifying the fact that I.R.R.C.S. was called to fill in the gap left by the old institutions of liberal cultural diplomacy, which had been subject during the first part of the 1950's to pressure, de-structuring and, in some cases, to extinction by ending the activity.

The idea of a public or state organization meant to ensure the external cultural dissemination is not of recent date, neither is it strictly political. This type of activity was dealt with mainly by people of culture subsumed most of the time to a state administrative organization I.R.R.C.S. is a new idea by its dimensions and rhetoric. As expected, it undertakes without reserves the role of a pilot institution in the external cultural promotion, a test institution, by that it does not wish originality, but on the contrary, it even declares itself an extension of V.O.K.S. in Romania, an institution created after the Soviet model.

By closing two major cultural institutions in Bucharest, the French Institute, to which we shall return later, and the Italian one and by excessively limiting the relationship with the Western cultural world, it is given a deep message of involvement in the country's cultural life and of limitation of its directions. The first accommodation steps are also marching steps to a new cultural vision: The Eastern direction, even if in the first stage it is still searching only for acceptance and implementation possibilities. The French traditional model of cultural and intellectual influence in the "era when culture is planned, administered and controlled by the State", as Miklos Molnár affirmed, is abandoned in favour of the Soviet state in the context of breaking the relationships with the Occident, of the Cold War and outlining of the policies of the two camps.

France has represented for Romania a land of cultural exchange extremely permeable, due both to the fact that traditionally Romania and France had tight

contacts, and culturally also as a consequence of having concluded a cultural agreement in 1938.

After 1948 and by the establishment of new propaganda institutions abroad, the French socialist traditions were for post-war Romania a catalyser of its new orientation in the field of the external cultural propaganda. Nowhere has there been easier the penetration of left ideas than in France which benefited from a powerful left press and socialist traditions embraced by the men of culture, active, influent politicians. In the inter-war period, The French Institute of High Studies in Romania⁸, established in 1925, functioned in Bucharest. For the period comprised between 1925, the year of its informal establishment, and 1939, the signing moment of the cultural Agreement between France and Romania, the French Institute carried out numerous cultural projects, exchanges of readers and students, although its structure was not very well regulated, the only certain data being that the French University was the buyer of the real estate where this institute was functioning, whose president was Alphonse Dupront. On March 6th 1936, before the signing moment of the cultural Agreement, Dupront sent to Paris a detailed note speaking about the legal status of the Institute, expressing that that issue had remained unsolved for a long time, but was under debate.⁹ Once with signing the *Agreement for the intellectual relationships development between France and Romania* dated on March 31st, 1939, the functioning norms of the French Institute in Bucharest were regulated by a protocol to this agreement providing that this institute, which functions in a real estate belonging to the French state is a centre for education and scientific documentation organizing exchanges of teachers and students, coordinating and leading the French organizations and institutions of cultural cooperation in Romania.

The major changes culture goes through starting with 1947 and continuing with 1948 radically transforms the area of external propaganda too and diverts this area to a drastic reconfiguration. On November 19th, 1948 Romanian unilaterally denounces the Cultural Agreement between Romania and France by a Decree issued by the new Romanian Popular Republic, and the consequence is the forced closing of the main instrument for its application, the French Institute of High Studies from Bucharest. In the exposure of the reasons laying at the basis of the unilateral denunciation of the Agreement, reference was made to the closing of the Romanian School from Fontenay-aux-Roses, and it is specified: “conceived in the spirit of rights of inequalities between the contracting parties, such agreement is characterized by unilaterality to the detriment of the Romanian party deriving from the agreement, adding that at the moment the French government understands to apply such agreement by arresting and expelling our students, raiding and making searches at the Romanian School from Fontenay-aux-Roses, dissolving the

⁸ ANIC, fund Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund (hereinafter C.C. of the R.C.P.), Propaganda and Agitation Directorate, file no. 83/1949, pp. 1–14.

⁹ André Godin, *Une passion roumaine. Histoire de l'Institut français de Hautes Etudes en Roumanie (1924–1948)*, Paris, s.a.

Romanian-French friendship Association, forbidding the democratic gazette of the Romanian colony in France and supporting the fascist elements which ran away from Romania in their attacks against the Romanian democrats from France.¹⁰ In a note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the development of the Romanian-French cultural relationships after August 23rd, 1944, it is mentioned that the official cultural relationships with the French state ceased once with the denunciation of the agreement, the cultural actions in France being reduced to those undertaken by the Legation and the France-Roumanie Association.

Prefiguring the words of the mathematician Simion Stoilov, an ambassador at Paris during 1946–1948, who declares that for the edification of the “new Romania, determinant it should be the influence of some French professors, artists and writers belonging to the left parties, such as Aragon, Langevin, Prenant etc”¹¹, the new French cultural actions in Romania shall be taken over, in a great measure by the French left politicians and writers through France-Roumanie Association. France-Roumanie Association was set up in 1948 and was initially perceived as a communist organization, as a note sent to I.R.R.C.S.¹² to the Division of cultural relationships from the Ministry of External Affairs. Subsequently, it is mentioned in the information that efforts had been made in order to increase the association’s sphere of influence in its intention to cover more social categories.

The traditional French-Romanian relationships live their last days of hope around 1947 and the establishment year of I.R.R.C.S. Aligned ever more faithful to the Soviet position by the political leaders in Bucharest, the cultural policies no longer regard France not even as a line of contact between the two ideological camps. Rallied to the imperialist camp, France is thus not perceived anymore as capable to offer cultural collaboration policies acceptable for a government ever more determined to socialism. In a new, russified set, normality becomes a turning of weapons on the cultural field against the Occident. This thing is accomplished not gradually, but suddenly, and for a period of one decade, approximately irreversible. In this context, the need of a newly established institution arises, such as I.R.R.C.S. according to V.O.K.S. Soviet model.

One of the events best illustrating the breaking of the French traditions in the Romanian space is the organization of The Soviet Book Exhibition, opened on October 1st, 1947, after the model of the pre-war French and English exhibition in the same expository place Dalles Hall. This time, a special hall was reserved for the Romanian translations from the Russian language published with Russian Book Printing House, and less and less space is given to the editions of Occidental book.

Once the control over each intellectual product and over each form of intellectual communication and form of publication was established, the first lists of forbidden works appeared and the tendencies of the new policies regarding

¹⁰ *Memo regarding The French Institute of High Study in Romania*, in ANIC, fund I.R.R.C.S., file no. 176/1956, pp. 128–131.

¹¹ A. Godin, *op. cit.* p. 164.

¹² ANIC, fund I.R.R.C.S., structure 2, France, file no. 191, p. 49.

literature in the new regime became obvious. The model laying at the basis of constituting the censorship was that of the Soviet Union, an institution similar to the Soviet one being created, namely the General Division for Press and Printings which had the role of controlling the texts, the translations, controlling the materials coming from the import and those meant for export both for institutions and for natural persons. As from the establishment of the Division for Press and Printings in 1949 until its dissolution on 1977, its attributions evolved and led to the control of all fields of culture, especially literature and literary translations. I.R.R.C.S. shall be subject to the norms imposed by the communist censorship by that the cultural goods offered to the exterior complied with the provisions imposed by this new institution and did not deal with subject undesirable for the regime. These consecrated French authors were kept in the Romanian translations only if their work was social, in other words the titles, not the authors were censored insofar as they served the new ideologies. Literature was accepted only insofar as it served to social purposes and the authors were accepted only if they could serve by their works to the building of the new socialist society: translations were accepted only from the classics of the French literature having social preoccupations: Molière, Balzac, Zola, Victor Hugo¹³, certain volumes from the river novel *People of good will* by Jules Romains or the poet Paul Éluard with his political poems. Despite the propagandistic role played by all this socialist literature, we must not forget that translating this foreign literature were created the means to give a wider access for everyone to this mass artistic production.

Referring to these common considerations which make that French literature be presented to the public only if the authors have communist views or their themes are of social nature, the poet and translator Alexandru A. Philippide¹⁴ and the writer George Călinescu were invited to present their opinion regarding the role of the French left writer at the *Exhibition of French Book* from Bucharest in 1953. Alexandru Phillipide said: "Today's French progressive writers, although driven by the same spirit as their great predecessors, no longer work isolated as they used to, but organized and united. Their force is thus bigger and their action more fruitful. [...] The social content of today's French progressive literature enriched with an element of amplexity. This element is the fight for peace." This always selective penetration of the French works in the communist Romania diminished the impact of French literature in its entirety, the contemporary writers being assessed as existentialist, an artistic current which was abandoned in Romania in favour of a socialist realism of the obsessive decade. This ideological filter served to the other cultural areas in the same way, from the organization of public conferences with social themes, styles in the composition of plastic artists, the organization of Exhibitions on common, current themes.

In December 1951, a Romanian Exhibition of Plastic Arts (*fig. 1*) was organized in Paris, at Allard Galleries, by the Friends of Romanian Art, socialist

¹³ A. Godin, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁴ ANIC, I.R.R.C.S. Fund, structure 2, France, file no. 164/1953, p. 17.

organization related to the Romanian-French Friendship Association that were functioning in France at that time. The exhibition was very well received by an audience composed of those attending the actions of the Friendship Association. The Golden Book of the Exhibition comprises positive appreciations as regards the objects of social inspiration, one of those appreciating with powerful emotions the entire change of the society used to say: "The more you explore the live works of modern art coming from Bucharest, the more you realize the extent to which these wonderful pictures mirror the past and current work of the Romanian workers for freedom and peace. Watching these successful works, I can fully realize how true it is that this huge wave of enthusiasm for building socialism stimulates all young Romanian artists".¹⁵ The author of this note is André Langevin, Vice-President of the Friendship Association, a well-known French socialist, a constant supporter of the Romanian cultural projects in France, son of the well-known anti-fascist militant, Paul Langevin, the initiator of the Langevin-Henry Wallon plan, emblematic for his left humanism in the after liberation of France. The French visitors expressed their impressions in writing only regarding the paintings of realistic socialist inspiration, such as: Andrei Bordy, *The highlighted workwoman*, Șaru Gheorghe, *To the abatis*, Popescu Justina, *Highlighted workwoman at 23 August Plants*, Rind Becca, *Here come the tractors* (fig. 2), Ștefan Szöny, *Clandestine printing plant* (fig. 3), and the sculptor Maximilian Schulman, *The foundry men* (fig. 4). The classic painters, present in this exhibition with paintings of social inspiration, such as Corneliu Baba, Alexandru Ciucurencu, Iosif Iser, do not find themselves among those remarked by the public's appreciations, despite the fact that the recommendations of the Committee that had organized the exhibition had been very clear: "Besides the recent works inspired by the socialist realism, which would have a great success to the French public, there should also be some works of painters such as Luchian and Grigorescu, already known for a long time in France. The co-existence in the same exhibition of these two series of works would allow to draw the attention of a public as large and as various".¹⁶

The implementation of the new cultural strategies involves at this moment new institutions, new personalities, but what is most important, a new approach and presentation themes. That the Western is not ready for this kind of militant art shall be seen in the reports arriving through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the reports drafted at I.R.R.C.S., which offer us the image of their impact on the French artistic and cultural environment. The press reports¹⁷ drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs registered several gaps in the editorial activity from France which presented the Popular Romania in few press articles and in a quite niche press, a thing which was completely unfavourable. The only press favourable to Romania was the progressive one, represented by *Démocratie Nouvelle* and *L'Humanité* where the frequency of articles regarding Romania's revolution was

¹⁵ ANIC, fund I.R.R.C.S., structure 2 on countries, France, file no. 154/1947–1953, p. 124.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁷ ANIC, fund C.C. of the R.C.P., Propaganda and Agitation Directorate, file no. 13/1964, p. 13.

much lower than that of other popular democratic countries, such as Hungary, Poland or Czechoslovakia, as was registered in an I.R.R.C.S. report.

The forced closure of the French Cultural Institute put an end to a long-lasting cultural relation, as it was that between France and Romania. Built in more than a century, the Romanian-French cultural relations reached their climax during the inter-war period. This tough measure laid at the basis of politics' interference with a liberal sector, such as that of representing the cultural identity of a state by unengaged cultural institutions, and marking the start of a new system of bilateral cultural relationships. Thinking from a different perspective, the propaganda model created in the Stalinist and Leninist period remained the same, adapted to all communist countries, and, with small exceptions, none of them elaborated any strategy leading to refine of the cultural propaganda methods. For this reason, we have similar institutions in all Eastern states, institutions issuing and disseminating the same type of message: that of mass communication and communication for the mass, which no longer makes use of the great culture or address to any great culture.

In a new socio-political circumstance, marked by the contradictory political requirements deeply affected by ideology, it is difficult to conclude which was I.R.R.C.S.'s role and if this institute has ever risen to its role of a propagator of efficient cultural policies. One honest step with regard to the Romanian cultural policies in the period 1947–1960 offers us the image of a cultural glaciation which broke relationships and ended the natural process, of a march of the new meaning in ideological key over the classic reported to immutable values.

The issue of Romanian culture perception in the Western states during the I.R.R.C.S. operation may be regarded from two different angles: Was the effort of being known abroad maculated by the ideological language, immediately distinguishable, used in the cultural promotion or not? Or, the promotion of the Romanian culture, under any of its forms, was the modality whereby a non-democratic regime was nevertheless intercepted, known and cautioned or fined in its efforts of cultural representation.

The cultural propaganda, by its attributions, is called to respond to a necessity of legitimation or representation of the respective state in the environments to which it aspires, as Nicolae Iorga used to see the needs of a country of exporting behaviours for the purpose of connecting to the international relations: "a country does not belong to the place it lies, but to the horizon to which it aspires".

Did the Romanian state, by I.R.R.C.S. succeed in fulfilling these needs or, more exactly, did the Romanian state correctly understand its needs of real representation? Did the Romanian propaganda find the correct message for the exterior, under a visible ideologization, precisely for its avoidance? Did they succeed in recovering the chronical deficit of legitimacy, in the context of breaking the traditional relations abroad, or, on the contrary, the foreign propaganda mechanisms borrowed at the same time with the governing system also used the ideology specific to it making worse the image the new state wanted to build at the end of the war.

These are the questions we try to answer to by analysing the symbolic capital used by I.R.R.C.S. in the arena of the international cultural relations. The evaluation of the cultural propaganda must not be accomplished according to the number of activities, although it has a certain importance, but according to the visibility, impact and value it brings in the international circuit and their quantifiable results.

The settlement in thematic key of these questions moves the accents from an exclusively chronological lay on one that takes into consideration the discovery of the variables which brought changes of optics on the management of the cultural propagandistic segment. It is difficult to evaluate the impact I.R.R.C.S. had over the wake of the international cultural relations; as regards the current moment, we could say that it was null, taking into consideration the fact that the institution as such was totally forgotten, it no longer resonates in the collective memory, many contemporaries not knowing that it was the ancestor of the current Romanian Cultural Institute.¹⁸ Most consulted works are focused on the primacy of the politics as subject and variable of analysis, and the documentation/drafting method combine the thematic approach and the critical analysis of the documents with the chronological one. Insofar as the documentation progresses, one shall also appeal to the biographical method in approaching the influent characters found, either in I.R.R.C.S. management in the studied period, or in the sections of the Central Committee to which this institute was ideologically subordinated.

How could a society so attached to the western cultural values manage to slip so rapidly into a totally different direction, is a question issued most times when the political-diplomatic and also the communist cultural phenomena are studied. The total abandonment of the Western models and the more or less forced embracement of the ideas promoted by the communist leaders were dilemmas of the contemporary historiography when the phenomenon of communizing the Romanian society was studied. This question becomes valid also in the research of the cultural propaganda and the evaluation of the I.R.R.C.S.'s role.

¹⁸ The Romanian Cultural Institute published in 2005 a volume of analysis of the current cultural sector which does not mention I.R.R.C.S. as an institution of international cultural cooperation in the communist period, but it mentions the role of propaganda agent which these institutions played in the mentioned period: *all this institutional flourishing had more to do with propaganda than the arts. Culture was not just a matter of state, it was owned by it. The totalitarian state was the great patron, the almighty manager and administrator of culture. The official culture was exclusively led by a number of highly centralised institutions. The pyramid of control depended entirely on the state budget, which was the monopoly over culture*, in *A short Guide to the Romania Cultural sector today. Mapping opportunities for cultural cooperation*, Ecumest Association, Royal Netherlands Embassy in Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Institute, Bucharest, 2005, p. 10.

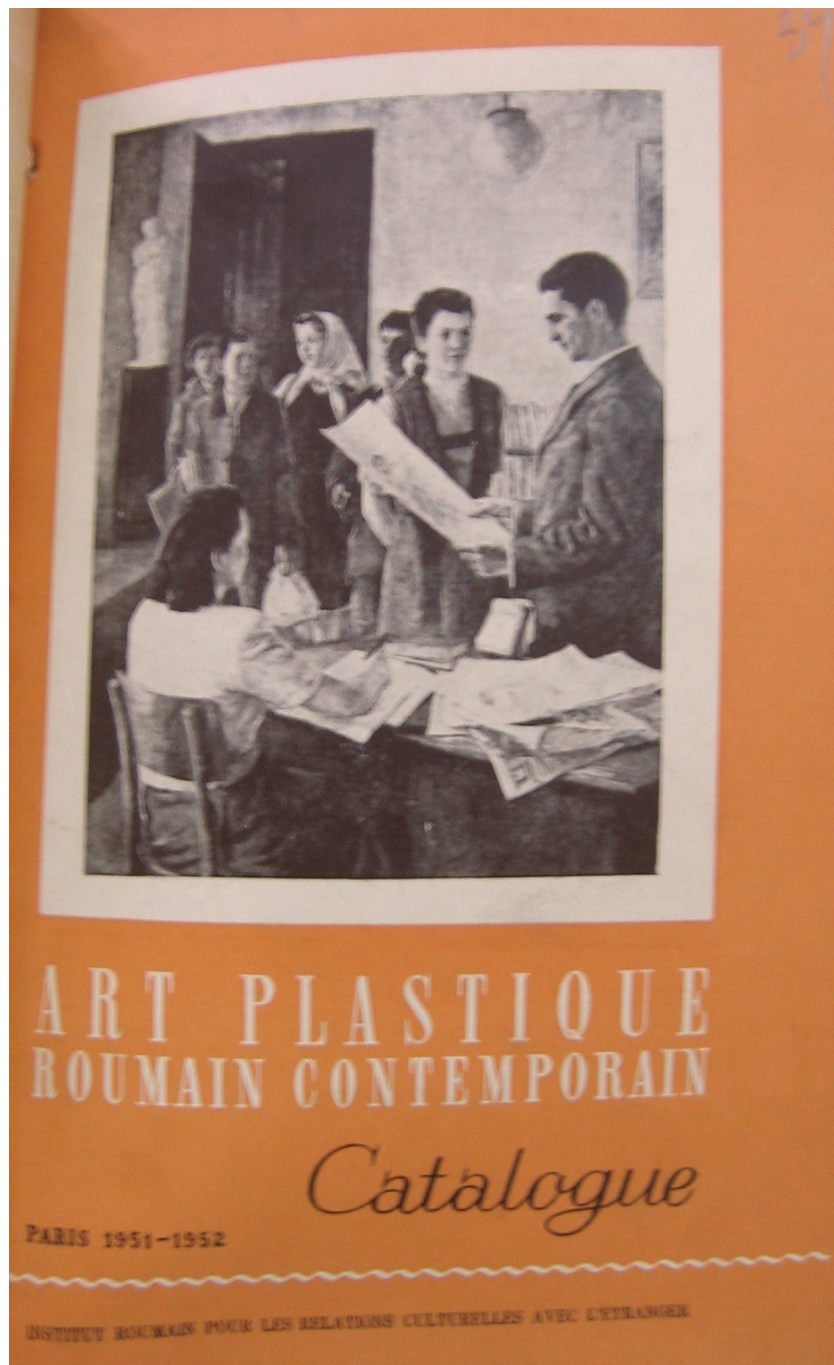


Fig. 1. – The *Romanian Exhibition of Plastic Arts Catalogue* (Paris, 1951–1952) in I.R.R.C.S. Inventory, structure 2 on countries, France, file no. 154/1947–1953, f. 39.

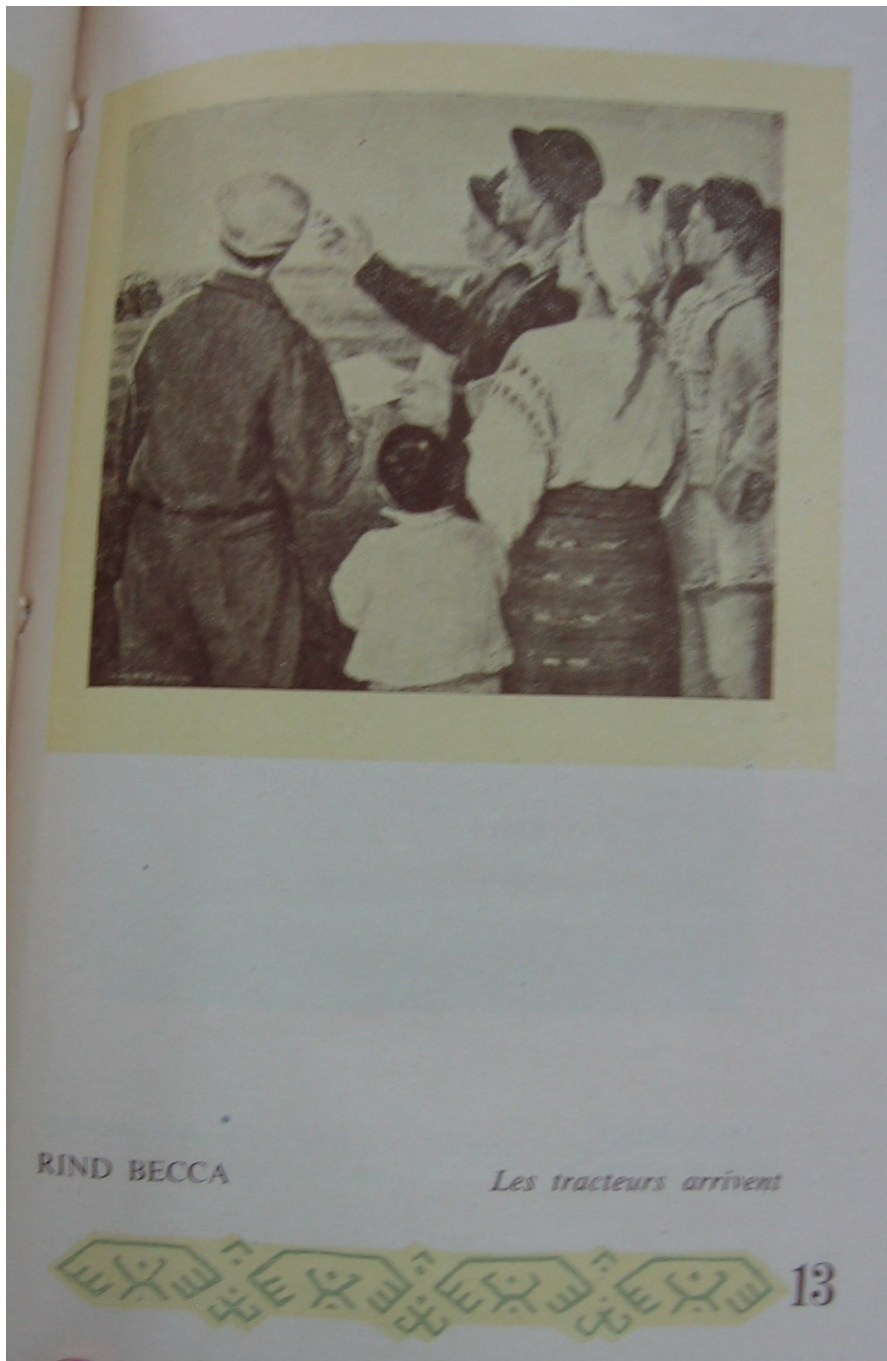


Fig. 2 – Rind Becca's painting *Here come the tractors* in I.R.R.C.S. Fund, structure 2 on countries, France, file no. 154/1947–1953, f. 46

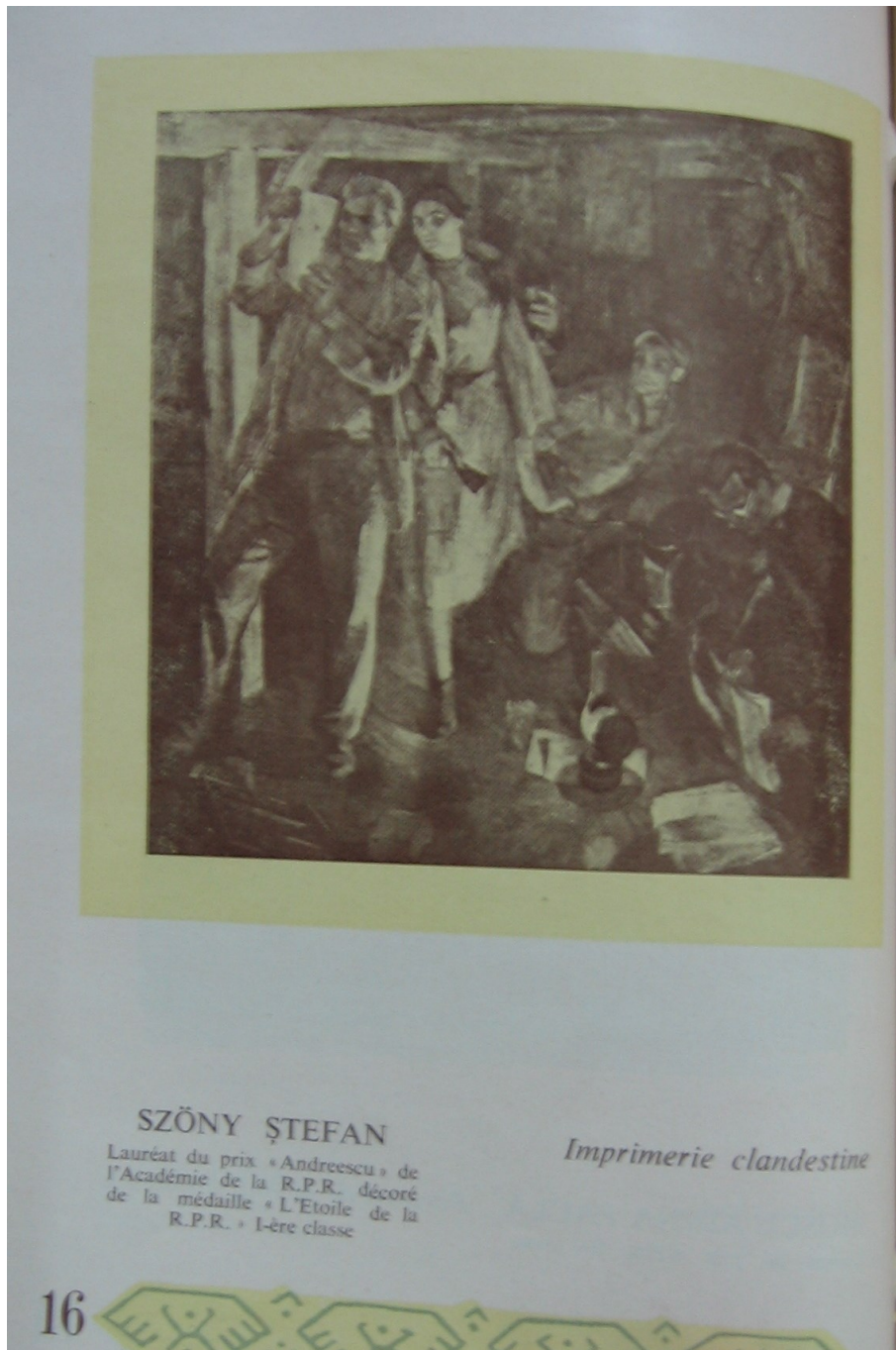


Fig. 3. – Ștefan Szöny's painting *Clandestine printing plant* in I.R.R.C.S.
Fund, structure 2 on countries, France, file no. 154/1947–1953, f. 50

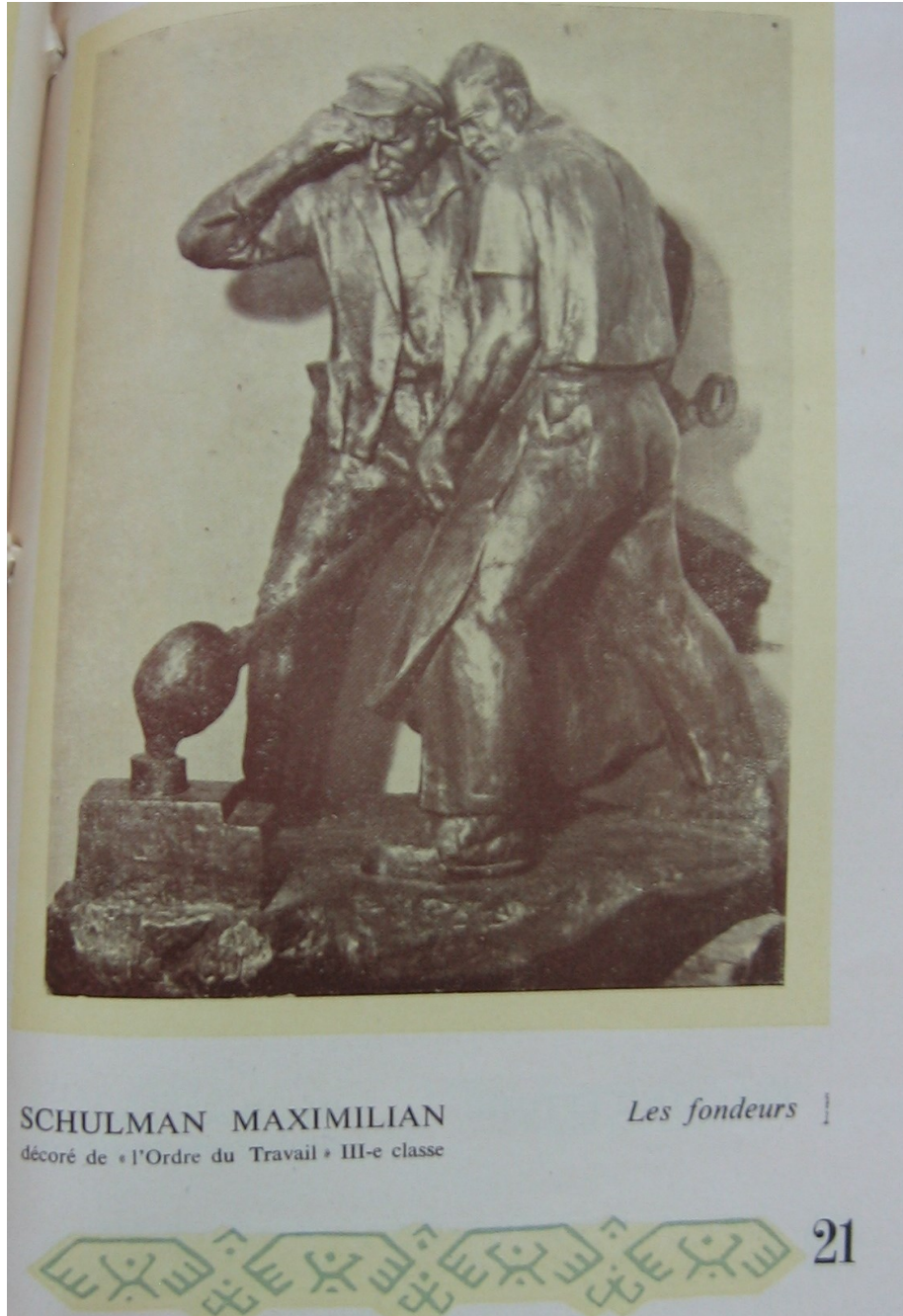


Fig. 4 – Maximilian Schulman's sculpture *The foundry men* in I.R.R.C.S. Fund, structure 2 on countries, France, file no. 154/1947–1953, f. 56.