Chapter 8

Sociological School of Bucharest’s Publications and the Romanian Political Propaganda in the Interwar Period

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the ideological orientation of two of the most important interwar Romanian publications endorsed by Academician Dimitrie Gusti and scientifically sanctioned by the Sociological School of Bucharest: Curierul Echipelor Studențești [Student Teams Courier, issued between 1935 and 1938] and Curierul Serviciului Social [Social Service Courier, issued in 1939]. The two magazines played an important part in strengthening the personality cult of King Carol II (who ruled in Romania between 1930 and 1940) and in legitimizing his regime of monarchical authority, established in February 1938. Moreover, the abovementioned publications were used by the monarchy to support the politico-ideological actions of the Romanian youth enlisted in the mass paramilitary organizations of the time, intended as an alternative to the similar structures of the Legionary Movement (which was experiencing a significant boom in the interwar period). The paramilitary youth organizations of the 1930’s, established under Carol II’s regime – mobilizing en masse young people of all ages and levels of education, at first voluntarily and later compulsorily – served as models or precursors for similar structures that would later be set up by the Communist Party, after its accession to power (March 6, 1945 – December 22, 1989) as a result of the Soviet military occupation.

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MOTTO: CREED OF THE SENTINELS OF THE MOTHERLAND

Faith and labor for Country and King

1. I believe in God and in the Church of my forefathers;
2. I believe in the King of the Country, our Great Sentinel, the Helmsman of the Romanian People’s destinies;
3. I believe in labor and sacrifice – consecrating my entire being to the rise and prosperity of the Motherland;

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, the public dissemination of relevant information – be it political, economic or military – played a pivotal role in the history of humanity, regardless of its manner of propagation: unmediated or mediated through print, audio-visual medium, or electronic medium. In ancient or feudal times, when illiteracy was norm widespread among the masses, the job of direct, oral dissemination of information in communities was carried out by town criers; however, with the increase of literacy and the dawn of newspapers and periodicals, written media eventually assumed this important social function. In the eighteenth century, fuelled by the development of capitalist economy and the increase in trade, the Western cultural space witnessed the apparition of the first printed newspapers; in 1833, the New York Sun became the first daily newspaper of mass circulation. In the first half of the twentieth century, against the backdrop of the two world wars, film and radio have become, along with print media, effective tools of political propaganda and mass communication, susceptible to fundamentally influence public opinion. Therefore, it can be concluded that the combined effect of technological advancement, economic development and illiteracy decline brought about an increased proliferation of the mass media, which, in conjunction with the education system, became the vehicle of social change (Rostow’s stages of economic growth theory) (Oluseyi and Gallop, 2010, 243-245). However, mass-media is at the same time responsible for its persistence in widely propagating major social stereotypes (Papa, 2012, 2223). Also, in its current instance of historical evolution, today’s modern society is marked by the so-called “media events”, a phenomenon defined by the inspired phrase “high holidays of mass communication” (Dayan and Katz, 1992, 1).

It is about those historic occasions – mostly occasions of state – that are televised as they take place and transfix a nation or the world. They include epic contests of politics and sports, charismatic missions, and the rites of passage of the great – what we call Contests, Conquests, and Coronations (Dayan and Katz, 1992, 1).

All these theoretical preliminaries constitute the conceptual framework that will allow us to understand – throughout the present study – the complex interplay between the communication medium and the (geo)political (inter)national space (Christensen and Christensen, 2013, 362).