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# Vatican radio. Romanian identity personalities (archive documents from 1969-1971)

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**Abstract**

This article presents some of the results of a postdoctoral research conducted between 1 August and 30 September 2015 at the Vatican Radio. As a result of the research in the archive of the editorial office in Romanian, we found supporting documents, chronologically ordered, of the programs that were broadcast in 1969-1970. We have selected only the texts which, in their message, can create Romanian identity profiles (Eugen Ionescu, Vasile Pârvan, Sever Pop) in a virtual space - Vatican Radio, which outlined the "linguistic personality" needed by the Romanian language department. All the fragments are well-designed journalistically specific to Vatican Radio requirements. These were aimed at transmitting information in the world of clear, pertinent messages about the notions of Romanian culture in a troubled period in Romania. In 1969-1971 the Romanian language department was presented by Father Ph.D. Flaviu Popan and Mircea Popescu, and by the end of the year, by Monsignor Ovidiu Bârlea, leading intellectuals of exile. The texts analyzed in this article, which gave rise to a lively interest, have as a thematic support the vast culture of Professor Mircea Popescu.

**Keywords**: archive, documents, Romanian identity, personalities, Vatican Radio.



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

When it comes to radio functions, as general media functions, most communication science specialists have the tendency to say that it has the function of information, the persuasive function, the education function, the social function and the function of the entertainment. Definitely, the Romanian department of the Vatican Radio station fulfilled all the classical functions of radio communication in the unfortunate period of national-communism.

The Vatican Radio, as a traditional mass social communication tool and as a technical means of transmission of information, aims to transmit the message of the Catholic Church through the proclamation of the Gospel worldwide. Through his daily, uninterrupted work since February 12, 1931[1], the Vatican Radio has the purpose of evangelizing, ecclesiastical communion, understanding and solidarity among peoples, and has as its objective to unite directly the center of Catholicism with the various countries of the world. Catholic life and the Christian message of the pope's activity intertwine with the help of the ”word” at the newsstand.

The world of radio gathers an ”invisible crowd” that follows daily religious shows and international news as well as important information from the country of origin of the language in which it is issued.

Over the years, both in terms of programming, the organization of its business, and the technical segment, the radio has grown steadily. This continuous development makes the Vatican Radio a tool in a permanent modernization proccess, professionally well-equipped to carry out its institutional tasks.

All linguistic and cultural barriers are overtaken in this radio station. It is currently being translated into 45 regular and 38 online languages of the site, representing 59 different nationalities, each program managing the entire patrimony of the people it represents, finding an effective language for listeners spread throughout the world.

The multicultural environment of language editions is captivating and gives the impression of living in the center of the world and at the same time throughout the world.

# 2 THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

The Romanian Department is one of the top ten language programs (French, Spanish, German, English, Polish, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Portuguese, Lithuanian) set up at the Vatican Radio.

[1] The first speech given by Pope Pius XI to Vatican Radio was in Latin on February 12, 1931.



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Over time, the mission of the program in Romanian is not easy at all because the message it conveys to the listeners must combine strictly religious information with the socio-cultural ones that must be adapted to the historical context.

In 1947[2], Vatican Radio broadcasts in Romanian in a rather turbulent historical period. After the Paris Peace Conference (ending in October 1946) and the signing of the treaty concluded in order to make territorial adjustments, the Catholic Church outlines and transmits its own strategic point of view. On this occasion, Pope Pius XII tells a speech to the churches that must ”stay” behind the ”Iron Curtain”. The speech is translated by the rector of the Royal Academy of Romania in Rome, Petre Panaitescu, and broadcasted on the radio by the program in Romanian. In fact, the translated message is *the first Romanian text* that was heard in March 1947.

The first speaker and the first editor of the Romanian editorial was the Monsignor Pamfil Cârnaţiu. This, along with the PS Bishop Vasile Cristea, officiated Mass every Sunday and at the great feasts in the chapel of the Vatican Radio station, which was broadcast on ”media waves”.

Numerous religious personalities, emigrated Romanian united hierarchs, Greek Catholic or Roman Catholic priests, who have assumed the role of announcers, have been on the Vatican Radio over time. Initially, periodic, experimental programs were broadcasted, which subsequently became permanent (three times a week for a good period of time).

## 3 SUPPORT DOCUMENTS FROM 1969-1971. IDENTITY VALUE

The Vatican Radio, during the period we refer to (1969-1971), has broadcast its shows from the Palazzo Pio (office assigned to the post by Pope Paul VI).

The interdisciplinary and inter-systemic approach finds its justification also in the thematic diversity of the texts transmitted by the Vatican Radio, which did not cover only issues of Western dogmatics and ecclesiology.

Over time, the issue of all foreign language editions from Vatican Radio underwent transformations based on both religious and socio-political contexts.

Of course, the editorial in Romanian also imposed the thematic change of the programs. Analyzing the files in the archive we found that there are several stages in the evolution of the religious message, but also of the Romanian identity message.

Together with religious themes, which occupy an ample space within each issue, a topical theme is the promotion of Romanian cultural ”fragments”, ”segments” and ”personalities”.

In our analysis we stopped on four important texts that have been issued over three years (1969-1971), where we find out some outstanding Romanian

[2] In the same year, it was also the first broadcast in Czech language (April 22).



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personalities who, through their own scientific texts, have attracted the attention of the Romanian language department's delegates from Vatican Radio.

On **October 22, 1969**, speaker Mircea Popescu presents in the radio program the theme: *A small anthology of Romanian poetry*. The professor confesses that *"a book with a yellow cover, called Il pensiero (Gândirea/Thinking), fell in our hand, almost by chance. As above this title was written poesia romena, namely Romanian poetry, I browsed the volum, which is part of a collection of Small Texts of Poetry".*

This is a volume of poetry published between the two wars in the well-known Romanian journal of Christian and nationalistic inspiration „Gândirea" ("Thinking") under the direction of Nichifor Crainic. The poems were translated into Italian by Prof. Marcello Camilucci from Rome (journalist, collaborator at "Oservatore Romano", the official newspaper of the Holy See and Italian writer), "old and tried friend of the Romanians", who dealt mostly with religious lyrics of Panait Cerna (the one who wrote a monograph in 1927).

The poets whose poems have been translated are Nichifor Crainic, Lucian Blaga, Ion Pillat, Vasile Voiculescu, Vintilă Horia, Ş tefan Baciu who, in Marcello Camilucci's vision, remain among the most expressive voices in the lyrics of "Oriental Latins". In the preface the professor thinks that the magazine „Gândirea" is of Christian inspiration, always finding its point of force in religiosity and in the national traditions of the Romanian people (Banț a, 2015, p. 133).

The text broadcasted at the Vatican Radio demonstrates once again that any Romanian appearance abroad (even in translation) draws the attention of the speakers, eager to promote national culture.

The same interest presents the radio broadcast of **November 5, 1969** where Mircea Popescu discusses the theme: **Pârvan and the cult of the dead**.

Cult of the dead is noble, because it establishes the connection between generations, between parents and sons; is the link of the continuity of mankind and not only of a nation. The one who understood better and sought the meaning of this cult of the dead in Romanian culture was Vasile Pârvan, who is considered by Mircea Popescu *"– a mystic scholar (the noun and the adjective may seem contradictory, but they are not), who has been constantly suggested by the death problem. The very field in which he worked and imposed himself, archeology and history, offered him exceptional material of meditation. Because the excavations, the discoveries, were not for him, as it should not be for anybody, a material fact, devoid of profound significance, I would say metaphysical, religious significance".*

Pârvan's "memoirs" can be considered as a hymn of death. *"Here is the lyrical overture of the Worship of Emperor Traian at eighteen centuries of his death. It's since 1919. These are Parentalia. The living men remember the dead; it is a duty the mortals have established. It is the attempt to praise the eternally asleep, in order to make, by their likeness to us, praise or perdition to those of today".* Wherefore the conclusion: *Let's mention the founders. And the founder, by excellence, is Traian, the great emperor of the Romanians' origin* (Banț a, 2014, p.58).



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Not less inspired are the pages entitled *In mortem camilitamoum*, in which he states that *"man can only die with his body. And beyond, where there are only souls, it can no longer be dead "*, claims towards the end of the show Mircea Popescu.

The following year, in the radio broadcast *Eugen Ionescu and the Absolute* of **November 10, 1970**, Mircea Popescu tries to nuance his profile in order to highlight the spiritual side.

Very beautiful Mircea Popescu's pleading begins: *"There are some Romanian writers across the border who, slowly, overwhelmingly, become classics in the literature that adopted them. It is especially the case of Mr. Eugen Ionescu. By placing him among the immorals of the French Academy, he only took note of an actual situation. The Romanian Comediograph is today a moment in the history of the theater. A proof is the popular editions of his work, in the great languages of international circulation: something that usually happens with the classics".*

Later on, we find out that Ionescu's theater is well known in Italy, and one of the great publishing houses published pages of the Romanian-French writer's intimate journal, which outlined the book *Present-Past, Past-Present*. In this book, *"Ionescu's humorism disappears, or at most manifests itself in several laconic propositions, with which the writer resolves false questions: such as that of engagement in art, politicization of literature, pan-ideology, contemporary disease from which, in his opinion, we must escape as quickly as possible. It is no less virulent, so concise, the anti-historical polemic, on the line of Cioran and Mircea Eliade".*

Eugen Ionescu's statement: *"Our age is a time of disappointment, because it replaced the interest for Absolute with the political problem, with the political furore; when man no longer cares about the issue of the ultimate goals, when he is no longer interested in anything else than the fate of a political state or the economy, when the metaphysical problems no longer make him suffer, leave him indifferent, humankind is degraded, become beast"* is pertinently commented by Mircea Popescu.

The speaker argues that this is the point of view of a man of culture, of an art creator, who realizes that imanentism is sterile, that he does not give valid answers to the great questions that characterize man. In order not to blame him in some way, Mircea Popescu argues that atheism is the sign of mental poverty, of a deficiency of soul. Still, Eugen Ionescu says he is not endowed enough to believe, but that "he did not break the decks with God" (Bant a, 2015, p. 137).

At the end of the show, Popescu claims that all of Ionescu's work, especially after the "Rinocerii" ("Rhinoceros"), tends to an *Absolute* who can give meaning to the world and the existence. Popescu is optimistic and certainly believes that *"the future work of the comedographer, if he continues, naturally, on the path of deepening feelings, will reserve even more beautiful surprises"* (Bant a, 2015, p. 138).

The promotion of Eugen Ionescu at Vatican Radio highlights the recognition of the celebrity of the great Romanian artist's talent.

In the show called *Sever Pop about Romanian language* on **January 29, 1971**, Mircea Popescu grants a large space to the post-mortem appearance of the teacher's



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book, *Romanian Language, Romanity, Romanianism*[3]. Starting from the shaping of a short intellectual profile *"the Transylvanian scholar who had been, in exile, a professor at the Catholic University of Louvain and at the head of the International Center for General Dialectology, had succeeded in imposing himself everywhere in the philological and linguistic circles, thanks not only to his science, but also to the exceptional power of his work and organizational capacity. The 1960 Congress in Louvain, where hundreds of scholars from around the world took part, wakes up the general admiration",* Mircea Popescu announces the appearance of the study under the care of Alexandra Sever Pop (the author's wife).

Thus, we find out that the text contains *"various pages, in part texts of conferences, notes, occasional articles, for example on the anniversary of the union of Transylvania. From a conference held in Paris in 1950 at the Carol I Foundation, only the notes remained, which, however, are particularly interesting. Resuming the tradition of the Transylvanian School, Sever Pop denies the importance of Slavic influences in Romanian language, and uses, among other things, the well-known argument of religious terminology in Romanian*". True, however, is Sever Pop's statement that *"popular language is more Latin than cult language"*. Mircea Popescu is of the opinion that *"After perhaps four or five hundred years of Slavonic language in the church, it is really amazing how small the number of Slavic words is in our Christian and church terminology"*. Thus, the speaker reminds that *"some Slavic words have a Latin double: beside* ***blagoslovit*** *is* ***binecuvântată*** *(blessed), besides* ***a se căi*** *(being repented) is* ***a-i părea rău*** *(to be sorry), besides* ***sfinţi*** *(saints) are different* ***Sâmedru, Sânicoara, Sânketru, Sânziene,*** *and so on;* ***grijanie*** *(religious caring) is very well replaced by Latin terms as* ***împărtaş anie*** *(sharing) or* ***cuminecătură*** *(cohabitation); near* ***slavă*** *(praise) is* ***mărire*** *(glory); tradition is also called* ***cruce la drumul mare*** *(a cross on the highway). Of course, the Transylvanian scholar does not forget the basic words of religion at the Romanians:* ***God, Cross, Angel, Christmas, Easter, Eve, Baptism****, which are all Latin [...] The book is, in its entirety, a claim to Romanian Latinity. Latinity that also manifests itself in the religious field".*

It is worth mentioning in this show how Mircea Popecu claims that *"Latinity also manifests itself on the religious realm. Gheorghe Lazăr and, after him, Mircea Eliade, Rădulescu-Motru had much to fight against the misunderstandings of some hierarchs who, more than being Orthodox, suffered from slavism. It's worthy of attention the violent reaction of Metropolitan Grigore of Ungro-Vlahia when Mircea Eliade went to him, together with Daniel Tomescu, asking him to pay attention to the suggestion of simplifying the alphabet (not yet replacing it with the Latin alphabet): Who are you to boldly spoil the Romanian language and touch upon the law and the Orthodox faith? What are these heresies? ... Where is Jesus Christ without perispomeni (circumferential accent in Greek language – our note) above? Where is the alpha and omega if you, the wicked, have rejected the omega? The law and faith have gone as well since these days have gone, while some people like you have been burning alive, I'll send in exile all of you who come out of that hell's nest where t teacher Lazăr has clotted the eggs of Satan".*

[3] Gembloux, Éditions J. Duculot, 1969.



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*Slavism knew such reactions and excesses. It's good that Sever Pop reminded us, even post-mortem. They are always current".*

Considering to be an important and well articulated work, in 1970 Mircea Popescu writes a review of Sever Pop's *"Românismul" ("Romanianism")* which he publishes in *Revista scriitorilor români/* Review of the Romanian Writers[4].

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

In the radio programs broadcasted by Vatican Radio, the section in Romanian, from 1969-1971, it can be noticed that, under various forms of the text, the reference names of the Romanian culture (Eugen Ionescu, Vasile Pârvan, Sever Pop) are promoted under various expressions, among the Romanians in exile and not only in a virtual space.

Social and cultural institution, the Romanian department of Vatican Radio remains, along with Europa Liberă (Free Europe) and Vocea Americii (Voice of America), an important milestone in the relationship between Communist Romania and the Liberal West, playing both a conservative and a progressive role.

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