Abstract. This research tried to answer a few questions: What kind of history is promoted for cultural diplomacy means, which are the symbols of historical significance and how they are selected and constructed, to what extent a discourse of representation to the external representation of history is a creative selection of backgrounds and historical traditions. In the pre and inter-war period through a certain representation of national history, various intellectuals, diplomats and politicians are trying generate a sense of common identity or specificity and separateness from the others. It’s an entire discourse arguing about the specificity of their culture and history, the belonging of the Romanians to the Western European family in general and specifically to the Latin ones.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Propaganda, History, International Relations, Nationalism Studies.

In the late 19th century within the new Romanian state, old-fashioned diplomats did not appreciate cultural diplomacy or cultural propaganda and the instruments used by propaganda in order to influence public opinion being considered beneath them, and below the dignity of a nation which must be led by what it really is and not by what is produced by a fabricated image. This attitude is somehow explicable in a time were the universal vote did not exist, and public opinion as such was less important than the key inter-personal relationships.

The success of cultural diplomacy in the specific conditions of the interwar period in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the size of Romania in the absence of a significant powerful diasporas and the lack of direct economic or political interests was compensated by personal ties of friendship with personalities from the political and cultural circles of influence. Ivan Ilcev remarked “Romanians had most friends. Many of their propaganda successes in France of the Second

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Empire were due to their influential supporters: for instance, Ubicinii, E. Quinet and during WWI, R. Seton Watson”. They were an invaluable aid to the extent that cultural propaganda can be a political decision instrument. However, political and military weakness in a particular context, in conjunction with a political stake will cause a turn to cultural propaganda dedicated to the general public opinion (a kind of cultural public diplomacy in today’s terms). Various political evolutions in Eastern Europe, in general, and, in particular, the Balkan experience in the second half of the 19th century national liberation movements demonstrated that if the Ottoman, Czarist and Habsburg Empires emerged victorious on the battlefield, after each national upraise many concessions and national rights which prove impossible to get by arms were obtained gradually through diplomatic effect by using propaganda at the courts of the European powers. The Second Balkan War of 1913 was to reinforce this belief by virtue of which “at times chatter printing presses can be more useful than artillery rounds.”1 The 1913 Peace of Bucharest in terms of propaganda and image put Balkan Peninsula and Bucharest for the first time to the attention of the most eminent representatives of world culture (Anatole France is just one of them). It was a European war after decades of peace. The experience gained during the Balkan wars in terms of propaganda (cultural and political) would be useful for what was to follow after World War I when the fate of millions of countrymen and future borders were decided not on the battlefield but at the negotiating table. For the first time, it was of paramount importance the ability to influence and co-interest not only a ruling political elite of the victorious powers, but their public opinion as well. And also for the first time at the negotiating table was sitting a new military power whose public opinion attitude was influential enough to turn leading politicians decisions, namely United States. Even in the pre WWI period many renowned Romanian intellectuals insisted on the importance of winning European public opinion support for the Romanian cause. After the war, with the widespread voting rights, the universal public role and its influence through various channels, primarily through print or newspapers and later through radio programs and cinema acquired a totally new role. The historiographies of Romania’s neighboring countries (Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia) emphasize the idea that the Romanian diplomatic successes at the Versailles Peace Conference were due to winning European public opinion on their side thanks to a very agile and well founded cultural propaganda. At the beginning of 1917 in Paris and Stockholm press offices were established with the mission to select influential people with sympathies to Romania to gather information and coordinate the cultural and political propaganda.

For propaganda and cultural diplomacy in the interwar period, a special role was played by writers, cultural figures with an already created solid reputation even if often they were very young. Historians and writers involved in cultural diplomacy appear in the position of top government officials. They appear to do

their duty even if not all with the same enthusiasm. Cioran chose an appointment to Paris in 1942 to avoid concentration in the army, and stayed there no more than three months. We do not have solid documented arguments to judge the participation of Blaga, Eliade and Ionesco as patriotic acts performed by individuals who wished fervently a political involvement in this way. Blaga will hesitate, giving up the first diplomatic appointment. Cioran, Eliade and Ionesco received the diplomatic appointments in a very particular political conjuncture. Another category of cultural diplomats may be illustrated by career diplomats like Aron Cotruș a writer, who entered the Service at the age of 24, or Alexandru Duiliu Zamfirescu.

Aron Cotruș began his diplomatic career very young. He was part of the Romanian representative of the Office of Press and Propaganda to the Interallied Commission located in Padova. Then he worked at the Romanian Legation in Rome where he led the Propaganda Service until 1920 when he returns home at Arad. He will return to his diplomatic career after a break of 10 years in 1929 in Italy, in Milan. Its first on duty report dates back to March 15, 1929 and described in detail efforts to succeed the representation of opera Scourge of Sabin Drăgoi at Scala and the translation of Blaga’s drama “Mașterul Manole” into Italian and then the diplomatic efforts to introduce them into the repertoire of Italian theaters in Milan during the 1929 season. Blaga’s and Sabin Drăgoi works were considered representative for the Romanian soul being inspired by folklore, historical legends and myths who shaped what it was believed to be Romanian specificity. Will follow other reports that recounts the discovery of Gino Lupi working on a Romanian-Italian dictionary and the given support to find the Romanian books which he demanded. Finally, Cotruș will succeed to obtain for Gino Lupi even a fellowship in Romania. The efforts pay as Gino Lupi will become a prestigious professor and a friend of Romania in Italy over the years. Other reports during the years 1929-1930 retell about Romanian literature translated by Claudiu Iosipescu, George A. Silvestri and Nella Collon, to which contributed also with support and prefaces, Giulio Barton of the University of Rome and the writer Auguste Grazia.

Another career diplomat involved in cultural diplomacy and cultural propaganda is Alexandru Duiliu Zamfirescu. Its reports sent while he was accredited at the Romanian Legation in Rome (in 1938 and 1939) reveals a different picture compared with the one largely propagated by other cultural attachés. It’s a difficult period for Romania’s cultural diplomacy and propaganda, a period in which their main counterparts namely the Hungarian irredentists enjoyed appreciation and support in Italian political circles. It was a period where the old

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slogans of brotherhood under Roman-Latin common origin are found to have no effect. ADZ reports otherwise a spicy episode in which Mussolini would have said “Basta con sorellanze e fratellanze”. In Italy just like in many other places, the insertion of favorable articles about Romania, and its history and culture does not come for free, but in exchange of generous sponsorships or at least a serious purchase of issues belonging to the particular edition. It was the case with the special editions dedicated to Romania by the review *Terminii* which requires the purchase of at least 800 copies (material anyway useful for propaganda) as we learn from a deciphered telegram of 21 July 1939.

**Subsidizing the Media**

Achieving a favorable image, carefully coordinated from “the center” was an important duty of the Romanian diplomats as far as cultural propaganda is concerned, although its extent and rate of success is difficult to measure. The newspaper *La Romania* was distributed free within the diplomatic missions in the Italian capital in the late ’30s however its impact on the public opinion due to the very low print-run was minor, if there was any. More effective were the actions regarding the insertion of favorable articles in publications like *Revue du Monde Latin*, by publishing articles which contain subjects of interests for the usual readers. The best known examples of subsidized press are the French magazines (although highly disputable in terms of efficiency because they were addressed to an already favorable public opinion). Between 1930 and 1946 were published in *L’Illustration* 96 articles and reportages on Romania, some of the themes and topics covered are: about 30% being of military and geopolitical, cultural themes about 20% and 20% economic issues. Romania’s participation of an unprecedented scale in the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1937 was reflected in an entire issue of *L’ Illustration*. The entire content articles, pictures and propagandistic message were carefully controlled by the sponsors depicting Romania as a country united around the Royal Dynasty and King Charles II who led a country of bucolic peasants towards the path of economic and technological progress. Most articles here although signed by Robert Beauplan seem to reproduce excerpts from speeches of Romanian politicians and are representative at most for the propaganda image wanted by the Romanian officials, and say little about stereotypes or image of Romania and Romanians in France. The special supplement of *L’ Illustration* from 29 May 1937 dedicated to Romania is representative also for the symbolism encapsulated in the four images accompanying the text as it is intended to summarize the essence of the image wanted by Charles II of

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Romania at that time. Peleş Castle (the symbol of Prussian dynasty), the church Văcărești (expression of Orthodoxy and Byzantine spirituality), a wooden church in Transylvania (patriarchal world of the village), Cișmigiu garden of Bucharest “the capital without suburbs”. In the same paper the text signed by Foreign Minister G. G. Mironescu was published about Romanian defenders of Western civilization before the Muslim invasion, an idea supported one way or another by other French historians quoted in the article. In the case of Hungarian propaganda to this idea is added the defense mission of Western Civilization not only in front of the Islam but also against the Pan-Slavism and Orthodoxy. The ideas invoked by the Hungarians were simpler and somehow easier to comprehend by the general west European public, as the duality western-catholic is easy to comprehend. By comparison even today the Romanians are encapsulating a more complex identity and accordingly more difficult to represent and they should endeavor to explain the duality Latinity – Byzantine Orthodox spirituality, which for many intellectuals, by itself, it’s a contradiction in terms. Also other articles in L’Illustration signed by Henri Focillon, note the composite character of Romanian culture and spirituality, the Eastern component prevailing in the Middle Ages (Byzantine, Georgian and Armenian with Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque influences) while in the modern era can be noticed a “return” and adoption of Western formulas (especially the French branch) without abandoning the values of originality and Eastern spirituality.

The Omission

This strategy consists on ignoring everything that does not comply or is not in favor of a certain argument or a certain prefabricated image suitable for the Western powers. It is a method widely used and characterizes a cultural propaganda material as opposed to a cultural diplomacy material where, complexity and debate are the rule. As in France especially everything was oriental, Eastern was ranked among the public (including intellectual) as primitive, exotic, terra incognita, arid earth grubbing for civilization, it is not surprising that the Romanians in their cultural propaganda materials were omitting the Oriental and Slavic cultural influences. However, there were several attempts to reconcile and to represent this (uneasily comprehended mixture of Latinity and Eastern Byzantine cultural traditions). The Slavic and Byzantine cultural elements in the Romanian language and cultural models were copiously speculated by the Hungarian propaganda in an attempt to dismantle the Latin-Western component of the Romanian culture as an argument used to justify belonging of Romanians and their culture to the “civilized world”.

The Double Standard the Right Argument in the Right Place

At this point, hypocrisy and opportunism seem to be the rule. Romanian Cultural propaganda is no exception. When it comes to the province of Transylvania are used historical arguments, ethnicity, and the nationality principle, when it comes
to the arguments used for province of Dobrogea where the Romanian which was subject of colonization and where the Romanian nationals where a minority the ethnic and nationality principle as arguments are replaced with economic arguments, the mission to civilize and to spread the western culture mission argument, the balance of power etc. The identified disarray and fear of Westerners of the unknown, the “Asian hordes” at their backdoor was speculated by the Hungarian or Romanian cultural propaganda as argumentative discourse.

The Use of Stereotypes and Clichés

Exploiting pre-existent cultural stereotypes and clichés has not been forgotten as cultural propaganda officials very often make use of stereotypes. Equally in what concerns the Romanian as others blur or annihilate certain unfavorable stereotypes (with real motivation or not) were perceived as necessary actions. Playing with negative feelings or fears is a good way to win a certain public or to sell a certain image. People use stereotypes not only to define and justify the status quo but also to change it. Usually the ones who suffer from stereotypes are not those whose fears are exploited but those being presented in a negative light, the stereotyped. Traditionally, stereotypes have often been used to bring about a stronger and more unified sense of cultural identity, since their oversimplified and generalized nature is a key element in strengthening individual identification with shared values and norms. Formulation of new stereotypes favorable to their own nation (carriers of Western values, regional peace and stability guarantors) and manufacture of new unfavorable to the opponent (destabilizing, treacherous, Asian, etc.) is a commonly used method.

The Search for Historical Parallelisms

Cultural diplomacy relies on mutual understanding and mutual knowledge and awareness. Romania was a quasi-unknown country among the European public. And vice versa applies. Except for France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and neighboring countries for Romanian some Western European countries were known mainly through the literature created image, a picture is not always favorable or consistent with reality. Based on personal experiences and given the technological developments images attached increasing importance primarily symbolic. Posters and the cinema are a crossing point from the written to the visual cultural propaganda. Gradually, starting in the 20’s photography gains its rightful place in the cultural propaganda and diplomatic discourse. Theoretically, at first, an instant photo is meant to surprise a reality as such that no longer interferes with imagination and interests of the author and should therefore be a more trustable source of information. Cinema documentaries and the photo albums were added to the cultural propaganda and diplomatic efforts, in the case of Romania, being usually employed foreign specialists.
Geographical Arguments

Access to transportation routes and strategic routes (Black Sea, the Danube, the Straits, etc.) and finding a place for the propaganda justified the DR, gaining access or blocking the access to the Danube or the Black Sea have been used as arguments both by Romanian and Hungarian diplomats within the interwar period. The Geographic unity of the Carpathian Basin was Hungarian typical propaganda argument doubled by minimizing the cartographic representations of the Transylvanian Alps and strengthening the cartographic representations Eastern and Southern Carpathians as a king of natural barrier. Mihaly Karolyi’s words in a pathetic appeal to the Hungarian nation in 1918 are representative of this kind of argument: “Romanian army bayonets and cannons cannot stop rivers Maros and Somes to end in Tisza and all weapons and troops in the world can not move mountains which are naturally separating Transylvania form Romania”.

Historical maps have enjoyed special attention as they provide to the target audience a sober argumentation consisting on statistical data and demographics as a necessary support medium for the symbolic images. Most maps were ethnographic, or depicting economic resource focusing either on trails, river basins, geographic unities or infrastructure, networks of roads and railways. At the Versailles Peace Conference the American experts often complained of being suffocated by colored propaganda maps. The geographical arguments are usually completed with linguistic arguments. The Pan-Slavism and Pan-Latinism made full use of linguistic unity as a precondition argument and justification for a particular policy.

Religious Arguments

The entire Romanian cultural propaganda discourse is centered upon the idea of cultural belonging to the West, through their origin, language and modern culture, anyway an idea not easy to reconcile in the eyes of the Western public opinion considering the Romanian affiliation to the Christian Orthodox spirituality which was obvious and visible. The Romanians will never deny it and will represent it in all the cultural propaganda manifestations as an essential part of their cultural identity. The interwar cultural diplomats to counter Hungarian propaganda used to recommend a massive use of Greek Catholic Union with Rome idea and arguments as a reconciliation of the Latinity with the Slavic and Byzantine components, and then the presentation of the Orthodox tradition as part of Byzantine spirituality that was successor of the Roman imperial greatness in other conditions and in another dimension. Using religious argument has always been a double-edged sword because of the complexity of this problem. To be taken into account here are the standing tensions between Orthodox and Greek Catholics, Protestants and Catholics, Romanian and Greek Orthodox Church and Serbian. Often the worst conflict proved to be the fratricide.

It is to be noticed that, at the time, most cultural propaganda materials relied heavily on the idea of “race identity” the Latin, common ancestor, a certain romance noticed as being useful to amplify the propaganda effects at the time. However, pragmatic voices among the leading intellectuals like the renowned economist Mihai Manoilescu warned in 1929 the Press Direction (at the time in charge with Propaganda): “In relations between people as well as between nations, nothing is more rampant than romance. The Romantic cloak enveloping reality leads to entrench the concepts instead of conventional notions concrete and real. Knowledge of a country through the romantic images, maintains the most serious errors and false conceptions. What wins – if it wins – would be the poetic charm sooner or later lost in the candle of truth”. 9

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