

# The preparation of the population before World War II through propaganda radio broadcast with military themes

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**Abstract:** *The radio broadcasts on military topics that were broadcasted in the period immediately before World War II were propagandistic ones, asking for volunteer work presented as a sacred duty. The young people's deeds were presented so that everyone could feel proud of these accomplishments. Personalities of the Romanian culture were asked to participate in different conferences or radio broadcasts as their word was more likely to make an impact on the young people as all these actions were aimed at the education of the young generation. These broadcasts were addressed not only to the youth but also to the military as they presented news of bravery of civilians and military.*

*If “Ora străjerilor” and “Ora premilitară” were two radio programs aiming at the education of young people, “Ora Ostașului” mainly addressed the military. The programs consisted in folk and military music, heroic poems and news concerning the brave deeds of both civilians and military that fought against the enemy. In my study I will mention some of these broadcasts' contents, their aims and their editors.*

Carol the second gave special attention to influencing the young population, both through their curricular and extracurricular education in schools, and the capacities of the young iron guardists which he wanted to control, discouraging in this way

the iron guard propaganda. For this purpose in December 1938<sup>1</sup> was reactivated a youth organization, *Country Guard*, that practiced a parallel education to that applied in schools. About guarding and their aims there had been a lot of speeches at the Romanian Broadcasting stations especially during the broadcast *The Guards' hour*, broadcasted every Saturday starting from the first week of 1939.

Moreover, for the young population between 18 and 21 years old, obligations of military preparation were set up, a special one hour broadcast being founded in the Society's programs that was broadcasted at the end of the week, Sunday: *The Pre-military Hour*.<sup>2</sup>

One of the first themes of propaganda approached in the broadcast *The Pre-military Hour* was working at will, later called voluntary or patriotic work, of the pre-military troops. Representative for this is the *Pre-military Journal* from the 14 of April 1940.

Dem. Psatta, in *Love others as you love yourself*, addresses all the pre-military troops the calling "Beloved pre-military troops! You are the spring of the Romanian nation! The country, through its leaders, is calling you to accomplish a sacred duty of the present time. You have to fill in the empty spaces left behind by those that stand at watch at the borders of the country, you have to work the Romanian holy ground, so that through your endless work you give the country the welfare it needs".<sup>3</sup>

The young population were warned that this calling, sent "in this times of great balance, is not only the calling of the country, but also God's order. Helping your fellows you show the world that you are Christians; working the land to the last piece you show the world that the strong union of our souls is the granite wall that no storm can tear apart. Today, working the land is a duty as big as the one of holding the gun at the borders of the country. The one that would stop doing this is a deserter, unworthy of calling himself Romanian".<sup>4</sup> So, the young population was encouraged: "Work, for the well being of your fellows, for the strength of the country, for the happiness of our nation!".<sup>5</sup>

The text from which I extracted the above fragments (*Pre-military Journal* 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1940) takes up five typed pages, was approved by two different persons, through two stamps with signature; one of the censorship, round shaped, and one rectangular

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1 Eugen Denize, *The History of the Romanian Radioabroadcast Society*, vol. I, part I, p. 94. Law-decree from December 15th 1938 forced all young men between 7 and 18 years old and all girls between 7 and 21 years old to take part in the National Guard. The King was the supreme commander of the organization.

2 Eugen Denize, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

3 Dem. Psatta, *Pre-military Journal*, broadcast on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1940, in Romanian Society Radiobroadcast Archives (after mentioned A.S.R.R.), file 2/1940

4 *Ibidem*.

5 *Ibidem*.

shaped, which mentioned *good for broadcasting* between 16.18 and 16.34 hours. The script also has the signature of the person that read the text.

Beside the themes of propaganda, the *Journal* also had ten pieces of news in which those who helped with money and materials the Pre-military Organizations from the country were given thanks, and in which were praised the pre-military young people who were organizing cultural manifestations and the money they gathered through this manifestations were given to the army or to the state.

On March the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1940, in the *Pre-military Radio Broadcast*, major Toma Stroescu reminded the young generation that two years had passed since the endorsement of the Constitution of Carol the Second. The news presented in the events heading informed: “Another event: on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February this year, was pompously organized in all the country, as you heard before, dear pre-military, the celebration of two years since the Constitution was voted.

In certain regions, maybe you, pre-military people, also took part in these festivities.

I was keen on reminding you, dear pre-military people, tomorrow’s citizens of our country, about this celebration, so that tomorrow, when you will be called to run the affairs of this state, according to this Constitution, you won’t forget that in front of your child eyes, our dear monarch – His Majesty King Carol the Second – made up and gave birth to this new Constitution, which established a new and strong foundation of our State in every aspect”.<sup>6</sup>

The *Pre-military Radio Broadcast* from March the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1940 was typed on eight pages and had four sections in its content.

In the first part, major Toma Stroescu, asked the pre-military people to inform their colleagues “which are far away, living in the lofty mountains and in our rich fields, and so have no way of listening to us”, so that “the good news you hear, regarding what is accomplished every day, the Pre-military Preparation Institution, reach them”. He was addressing the following encouragement: “tell them about the good deeds of your pre-military fellows”.<sup>7</sup>

The second part, called *Events*, was dealing with three events that took place during one week, the interval at which the radio broadcast was on air.

The third part was called *Good accomplishments*, and presented the young generation the good deeds of the pre-military people. Here is an example: “The pre-military Gheorghita Stefan from Mora, Putna district, transported all of Tudorica Ichim’s hay, whose cattle were used for the army’s needs”.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout *Recommendations*, the fourth part, he addressed the young the following message: “Be always present at duty, and search to prove, especially during

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6 Toma Stroescu, Pre-military Journal, broadcast on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1940, in ASRR, file 2/1940.

7 *Ibidem*.

8 *Ibidem*.

this times, your dear monarch – founder of pre-military preparation institution – as well as your country, that you answered all expectations”.<sup>9</sup>

As for the guarding, relevant are the conferences held by Constantin Radulescu-Motru, important figure of the Romanian culture, which due to his position was chosen to influence the public opinion.

On 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1940, during the conference *Heroic Guarding* which he held at Bucharest Radio Station, Constantin Radulescu-Motru said: “The Guardian Institution is meant to educate the heroism of the young generation. Our duty is to help accomplish this aim”.<sup>10</sup> The lecturer showed that “we need well trained persons for a heroic life. We need steel characters. Guarding can offer us these. It has a brilliant leader in the mind of our Great Guardian; it has at its disposal, in the rich Romanian nursery, many great souls which can be formed for accomplishing its purpose”.<sup>11</sup>

Constantin Radulescu-Motru’s opinion was that on the Romanian territory there was plenty of heroism because “heroism was God’s gift to the Romanian soul. During our history, this heroism was seen mainly in: wars; generous donations to churches and hospitals; traditions”<sup>12</sup>. However he pointed out the fact that although “the nature of the Romanian soul has a great deal of heroism in it, there is only one danger threatening it. The danger of remaining unused and thus, of disappearing”<sup>13</sup>, but “the Guarding Institution is called to eliminate this danger”<sup>14</sup>. In his opinion, the heroic education has to be accomplished as follows: “The young guardian reaches the sense of sacrifice, not by totally obeying the discipline, but by learning to cherish his own qualities. Self confidence is the lever that holds together any courageous feeling, including heroism. When the young guardian rises above the minor egotistic facts, in which those that belong to his generation are usually trapped; when lying and quitting are unbearable; when his word is kept, because his words and his acts are sincere, representing his decision, then little is left to the completion of his education. What’s left will be fulfilled by the community of guarding, where others raised in the same spirit as him, will be his brothers in beliefs and ideas”<sup>15</sup>.

At the end of the conference it is underlined that “The guarding does not invent heroism, but it captures it and directs it. Through this heroism, that is emphasized, our youth elevates, becoming a shield for the King and the country”<sup>16</sup>.

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9 *Ibidem*.

10 Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Guarding heroism, conference broadcasted on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1940, in ASRR, file 2/1940.

11 *Ibidem*.

12 *Ibidem*.

13 *Ibidem*.

14 *Ibidem*.

15 *Ibidem*.

16 *Ibidem*.

The broadcasts such as *The guarding hour* or *The pre-military hour* were meant to educate the young generation according to the king's requirements which we can find in *Radio Adevarul* magazine from 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1939. The article named *The guarding hour on the radio* was presenting: "The special care that the Commander of the Guard of the country had for the education of the youth will guide the producers of «The hour» to adjust the guarding broadcasts according to the needs of the youth so that the broadcast can reach its goal in the triumph of the governing idea, the stability of the young generation by the Great Guardian: Work and belief for the country and King"<sup>17</sup>.

If *The guarding hour* and *The pre-military hour* were especially addressing the youth, *The soldier's hour*, brought on air starting with 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1940, had as its target public army men, aiming to prepare the population for the war that was imminent. It is not the only audio production on the military theme. From August the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1942, Radio Bucharest and Radio Romania will broadcast *The War Chronicle*, produced by the journalist Romulus Seisanu. Radio Moldavia will have in its program starting with January 17<sup>th</sup> 1942, a *Military chronicle* produced by lieutenant colonel Al. Constantin Mihaiescu. Other broadcasts with military contents were: *German hour*, *Italian hour*, *German-Romanian military hour*, *Italian-Romanian military hour*, and even *Happy hour of the soldier*.<sup>18</sup>

After the cession of Bessarabia and North Bukovina, the propaganda of the royal dictatorship tried to implement the idea that the cession of the two territories was necessary for protecting the rest of the Romanian territory and the king was the one that had the power to take this difficult decision. On the other hand, it was announced that Romania won't allow such losses in the future, and the rest of the territory will be defended with all available resources.

The propaganda effort that regarded the nearby war was accomplished mainly through *The Soldier's hour* broadcast. After Romania joined the war, at first, it was broadcasted daily, and later three times a week. The summary of the broadcast was the following:

- *Word for the soldiers*, section that was approaching a certain theme, sometimes signed, but mostly the author was anonymous.
- *Front news*, section introduced after the starting of the war, in which acts of bravery and heroic deeds of the Romanian soldiers and sometimes German soldiers as well were presented.
- Military and folk music.
- Short radiophonic theatre or poems on the subjects that were discussed before.

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17 Eugen Denize, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

18 Eugen Denize, *The History of the Romanian Radiobroadcast Society*, vol. I, part II, p. 203.

Here is the summary of the broadcast *The Soldier's hour* from July 7<sup>th</sup> 1940, a few weeks after its debut:

1. The hour signal.
2. *Word for the soldiers; Soldier's magazine.*
3. *They were heroes*, signed by Bratianu (ACT Choir lead by Radu Botez)
4. *Putna's Monastery Shrine*, by Ciprian Porumbescu (ACT Choir accompanied by Radio Orchestra).
5. *Our language*, by Bessarabian poet Mateevici (recited by At. Mitric).
6. *The soldier* (national march played by Pedestrian Gendarmes Fanfare lead by Major Albulescu).
7. *On our flag* (ACT Choir lead by Radu Botez).
8. *Romania's sons* (national march played by Pedestrian Gendarmes Fanfare lead by Major Albulescu).
9. *Pray to Jesus*, by Radu Gyr (recited by Nicu Dimitriu from the National Theatre).
10. *The hour signal* (by a disc with two marches).

From the summary of the broadcast we can see that over 50% of the broadcast space was devoted to music. Four marches were broadcasted, two of which were national marches, played by Pedestrian Gendarmes Fanfare lead by Major Albulescu, and another two being recorded on disc. The ACT Choir lead by Radu Botez interpreted three creations: *They were heroes*, and *On our flag*, and accompanied by the Radio Orchestra, Ciprian Porumbescu's *Putna's Monastery Shrine*.

The section, *Soldiers' magazine* presented, according to the author "glorious facts of our soldiers and from civilian life which – through their acts of good citizenship – share their endless love for the nation and country, in these hard times we are passing through"<sup>19</sup>.

It was divided in two parts, the first one called *Facts from the army*, presented news that were praising the soldiers courage or the way in which they were fulfilling their duty. For example: "Sergeant Pandariu Constantin ctg. 1938 and soldier Iharov Ioachim ctg. 1940 – from Group 3 Frontier guard – being on a patrol, caught four people who were trying to cross the border.

With determined courage and aimed by that sense of duty that all the soldiers need to have, the frontier guardians managed to arrest three of the fugitives and then the fourth"<sup>20</sup>. The second section, named *Facts from civilian life*, was made up of carefully selected news that presented civilian acts, but regarding the army. Here is an example: "The mechanic Ion Dumitrescu, from the Agronomic Research Institute, Baneasa, driving a tractor during the Bessarabian withdrawal managed to bring the following materials which he handed in to the military authorities: 52 ZD guns: two military rifles; 50 rounds; a helmet; a bayonet."

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19 Soldier's Journal, in „The Soldier's hour”, broadcast on July 7th 1940, in ASRR, file 5/1940.

20 *Ibidem*.

The mechanic Dumitescu saved these materials by taking them from the Russian soldiers, and from those who in the rough and painful times of the Bessarabian evacuation had been instigated to throw them away and to leave their houses”<sup>21</sup>.

*The word for the soldiers*, from “The soldier’s hour”, broadcasted on July the 7<sup>th</sup>, was signed by Mircea Stefanescu. He explained, in a ten page speech, why the cession of Bessarabia and North Bukovina was absolutely necessary. Mircea Stefanescu showed from the beginning that he wanted to say “why all that happened happened” and that he will reveal “the real meaning of this great wisdom and how much patriotic feeling came with this tragic decision, which grows your hearts sad to tears and astonished your mind to stone still”<sup>22</sup>.

The reason for which Romania was forced to cession Bessarabia and North Bukovina was the desire to avoid a multi front war which would have lead to the destruction of the country: “Do you understand now, soldiers, that there couldn’t be a true Romanian, that could have made a better judgment of this moment – as painful as it had to be – than this simple wisdom of not letting all gates open? If in an unequal fight, the Romanian state would have lost its existence and all of us our freedom, do you understand the wild happiness of those who would have had invaded freely through all open gates? This way, in return for a sacrifice, we gained what we could have lost and what we couldn’t have reestablished: we gained the untouched maintaining of all our armed forces, which we will need so badly”<sup>23</sup>.

As for the pride of the soldier, M. Stefanescu strongly affirmed: “No Romanian was humiliated – no soldier’s pride was drawn through mud! The major attempt we passed didn’t mark us with any defeat”<sup>24</sup>. He encouraged the soldiers not only not to believe the rumors that were passing their ears, but also to report them to their superiors: “There is no time for mistakes today. An entire nation can pay for one minute of distraction of one of you. And the gap that opens means the slavery of alienation”<sup>25</sup>.

At the end he underlined that: “The army is complete and will be victorious when the Leader of our nation will order”<sup>26</sup>. That’s why they ask the soldiers to “stay united around the great Soldier, united around the wise men who see the future more clear than us”<sup>27</sup>.

In the same radio broadcast there had been also broadcasted the poems “Our language” (by A. Mateevici) and “For Jesus” (by Radu Gyr).

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21 *Ibidem*.

22 Word for the soldiers, in “The Soldier’s hour”, broadcast on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1940, in ASRR, file 5/1940.

23 *Ibidem*.

24 *Ibidem*.

25 *Ibidem*.

26 *Ibidem*.

27 *Ibidem*.

We can see that these broadcasts had in view not only the education of the people, especially the young ones, but mostly they aimed at preparing the population for the war and for the challenging years that were to come by praising the army, its leaders and its victories. In my opinion all these broadcasts, propagandistic as they were, succeeded in making the population proud of being Romanians eager to fight for their country and their freedom.

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