

THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR – THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE OFFICE IN BUCHAREST (USAIS)

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Abstract

This material aims to present the activity and organization of the United States Information Office (or United States of America Intelligence Service - USAIS) in Bucharest at the beginning of the Cold War. The Information Office was an informative structure of the US State Department which was in charge of gathering information regarding the actions of the Soviet Union and the communist regime from Bucharest that were meant to lead to the communization of Romania. The Office was preparing general synthesis about Romania, and, implicitly about the communist camp. Various scattered and available information which existed in different public locations in Romania was collected, materials which were then sent to the American decision-makers in order to report in real time any discovered change which may have been of value to the USA security in the Balkans.

Keywords: Cold War, espionage, Romania, United States, CIA, Frank Wisner, Frank Shea, Radio Free Europe

The Information Office's leadership

By taking advantage of the Soviet invasion and the anticommunist orientation of the country, in August 1944 the structures of the American Informative Service rapidly established official relations with the defense and the security structures of the Romanian state, developing a close co-operation: *The General Staff of the Romanian Army, The Romanian Special Information Service (SSI – Serviciul Special de Informații), Prefectura Poliției Capitalei (Bucharest), The General Safety and The Gendarmerie*. In their return, the Romanian institutions decided to create some special bureaus that kept in

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touch with the American and British Mission, each having a representative staff who was fluent in English (ANIMV, FD 140, pp. 43-53).

However, the power seizure by the Petru Groza government and the decision to reorganize the Romanian Special Information Service (SSI) which took place on the 14th of March 1945, led to the aggravation of the American informative structures's situation from Romania. The networks and the agents, formerly created with hard work by Frank Wisner and his team, were compromised. The new leadership of the SIS reported to Groza Government: "Until the 6th of March 1945, the Americans have had the best elements of penetration in the Romanian objective, elements which they fully exploited" (ANIMV, FD 140, pp. 43-53). Consequently, it was necessary for Washington to rethink the organization of its informative agency on a new conceptual basis. The person who inspired and organized that agency was Colonel Walter Ross, known as being the head of the US intelligence community in Romania. The structuring of the informative departments was performed hierarchically among the two representations of the United States in Romania: the Military Mission and the Legation. Therefore, the first post-war organization of the American Informative Service from Romania took place within the Diplomatic Representation and the American Military Mission, according to the following structure: 1). The Intelligence Office – led by Lt. George Bookbinder (or Bockbinder); 2). Counterintelligence Office – led by Lt. Col. Walter M. Ross* (ASRI, Dossier Fund no. 2595, p. 68) who was helped by Madison Louis¹; and 3). The United States of America Intelligence Office (USAIS), structure also known as the Political Intelligence Service of the US Diplomatic Representation.

At the beginning, the United States Intelligence Service (USAIS) had few objectives, the most important one consisting in collecting information about the economic and political aspects, improving United States' image in Romania's public opinion through propaganda activities as well as monitoring the population's orientation. Since its inception, the Intelligence Service had undergone various organizational stages, during June, July, and August 1945. The leadership was appointed to Frank Shea, officer of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), who also carried out the job of press attaché of the Political Representation of USA within the American Military Mission in Romania. Bureaus were put at the disposal of the Office at the headquarters of the Political Representation of the Mission from Dionisie Street number 9².

¹ W. Ross (officer of Office of Strategic Services - OSS) came to Romania in January 1945 as head of the US Intelligence Service (there is information that he might have arrived in Romania as far back as December 1944), he lived in Nicolae Filipescu street number 22, drove the Mission's car number 42; according to a character sketch of SSI (Serviciul Special de Informații din România): "He was influenced by captain Madison who was more intelligent".

² From October 1946 the Intelligence Service moved in Diana Street no. 12, where all the departments were reunited.

Frank Richard (Robert) Shea was known to be a journalist and magazine editor. He studied at the Universities of Maine and Boston, worked for a period of time for the *United Press* from New York as information deputy editor. In 1941 Shea became head of the Manufactures National Association publishing where he edited magazines about adjusting plants, war production etc. In 1943, he worked at the Office of War Information and then he worked in Cairo for one year as head of the information section of the Office of War Information. After the invasion of Italy, he was transferred to the U.S. Army's Psychological Warfare Branch as head of informative operations in Italy. Shea arrived in Bucharest on March 1945, had two daughters, his wife being a writer (ASRI, D. no. 2595, pp. 1-11).

Frank Shea's informative possibilities were quite large, he had relatives in Romania, knew Romanian well, assets used to travel a lot in the territory. In an American paper, Frank Shea appears to be "Allan Dules's man in Berne"³ (Kirkpatrick, 1991, pp. 195-196). The information is reliable and completes the picture of Allan Dules's activity in Switzerland, whose focus was placed on our country as well. From his arrival, Frank Shea worked with George McDonald, with the aid of Florence (Chevy) Brown⁴ (ASRI, D. no. 2595, pp. 1-11), cultural attaché and Helen Heyden, secretary. Tereza Mendel was the typist, and Mona Mavrocordat was the librarian. Other employees were Ion Comșa, Angela Lerianu, and Imperio Matheescu, all working at the American Military Mission in Romania, since October 1944, where they had been doing the Romanian press review in English and, at the same time, had been distributing the press material (ANIMV, FD 149). In September 1945, Serafim Buta (member of OSS) was called to the Office, and was assigned with the distribution of American documentary films brought into the country (propaganda). In December 1946, Frank Shea left the country receiving other missions (Shea will become CIA official in Switzerland, 1949-1950).

Following Shea, the leadership of the Office was ensured by interim George McDonald (December 1946 – May 1947). McDonald was born in New York and studied at different schools of arts. Professionally speaking, George McDonald was a commercial artist and advertising specialist, for many years dealing with such activities. He joined the Intelligence Office of War in 1945⁵. McDonald came to Romania in August 1945 as Frank Shea's deputy, at some

³ In 16 November 1944, Robert Shea worked in France with David Kirkpatrick, having the mission to "hunt" Axis' agents.

⁴ Florence F. Brown, adjunct head of the U.S. Information Office in Bucharest, came in the country in July 1945. During the war, she worked as a member of the United States Intelligence Service in North Africa, India and China. She studied at the University of California.

⁵ George McDonald appears on the list of the OSS Stuff (CIA, December 2010).

point he was dismissed for economic reasons (around August 1947) but despite all these, he remained active. According to the SSI character profile, George McDonald was 40-42 years old, had mediocre education and general information, he didn't know any foreign languages, being in the United States government's service since the time of the war. He was aware of his low intellectual and cultural level, systematically avoiding contact with the Romanian intellectuals and officials. He had "close" ties with Fulvia Grigorița (Banu Maracine Street), a young swimmer, who, although known as his fiancée, appeared to have had different relations as well. George McDonald travelled around the country accompanying photo exhibitions, but because he couldn't speaking any other languages except for English and because he was very detached from the people he encountered, McDonald only established shallow connections, avoiding, if possible, contact with the Legation.

In January 1947, Donald Carl Dunham was appointed as head of the US Information Office in Bucharest but he came into office only in May 1947. He was 38-39 years old; he had a degree in literature, and was the son of a wealthy and respected family from Columbia, Ohio. Between 1930-1940, he worked in the US Diplomatic Service, having consular jobs in Berlin, Hong-Kong, Athens, and Aden. He resigned in 1940 to work at an important arts museum in New-York. In 1942, he was hired as editor of the weekly magazine *Life*, occasionally collaborating with *New York Herald Tribune*. At the same time, he lectured at the free *Coozer Union* University in New York, writing a memoirs book reflecting his life between 1930-1940, which was published in 1944 in New York and London. According to the SSI, the memoirs book "shows curiosity, intelligence, insight, synthesis and analysis power and a great knack for storytelling". Dunham rejoined diplomacy at the end of 1946, being appointed as head of the Information Office attached to the Bucharest Legation. According to his own confessions, during his stay in Romania he had an intimate relation with Nora Samuelly (see Dunham, 2000). Culturally speaking, SSI noted that Dunham had an unusual general knowledge, with a certain specialization in literature, psychology, philosophy and social science, artistic taste and strong interest in fine arts, developed analytical mind, psychological insight, sharpened critical eye with bitter and sour bursts against American civilization, against his colleagues and superiors he believed he was superior to (...).

The organization of the Information Office - the departments' structure, the staff's responsibilities, the salary and material basis

The organization of the US Intelligence office in Bucharest and the most of those presented below are based on different reports of the repressive organs of the Romanian state, especially those for the Romanian Special Intelligence Service (SSI), which the communist system took over in March 1945.

Once the preparations of the peace treaties advanced and they were signed, the Allied Control Commission's activity and the role of the American Military Mission in Romania should have ended. This is why, it was decided that the Information Office would be reorganized in order to compensate for the informative gap left by the Military Mission.

Thus, with Donald Carl Dunham taking the office, this meant the signal of transformations and instability for the Information Office⁶. The new chief's first intention was to assign Serafim Buta and place the Romanian press review under the Legation's Political Department control, both financially and functionally. The savings would be used to extend the library, to bring new documentary movies, and to assure that a few brochures on agriculture and public health from US would be published in Romanian. However, Donald Dunham's intentions had been temporarily encumbered by the Office's budgetary cuts from 1947-1948, as decided by the US Senate in July 1947. This measure first led to the pre-warning of some of the staff who began to leave the Office, and then some of them were called back: Florence Brown, George McDonald, and Serafim Buta. Consequently, the Romanian press review came out sporadically, appearing only in August and September.

It is worth mentioning that the organizational transformations in Romania were part of a wider plan. The US Information Office from Romania was part of the *Office of Politics Coordination* (OPC) led by Frank Wisner (CIA), using as an umbrella cover the US State Department. Since OPC's main tasks were: propaganda actions, the economic warfare, preventing direct actions (sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolitions, and evacuation measures), subversive actions against the hostile states (including supporting clandestine resistance movements) and supporting indigenous anti-communist elements from the free world (http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000104823/DOC_0000104823.pdf), it is not difficult to deduce the nature of the activities conducted by the US Intelligence Office in Bucharest.

In the fall of 1947, a US Congressmen visit occurred which struck a deal with the Legation regarding the continuance of the press review writing, part of the Office's expenses being incurred by the very US Legation budget. After the US delegation's departure, the Press and Information Office's departments were reorganized as illustrated below:

- a) *The library*, led by Mona Mavrocordat, with approximately 1200 books, 2500 brochures to lend, and subscriptions to about 160 magazines.
- b) *The Documentary Movies Department*, led by Serafim Buta.

⁶ Donald Dunham was appointed *Public Affairs Officer* of the US Legation in Bucharest.

c) *The Press Department*, which was daily broadcasting the news from Washington – under direct supervision of Frank Shea – and the Romanian press review in English – under direct supervision of Ion Comşa. The Department also had the task of distributing media materials to applicants.

d) *Social and Cultural Department*. The department established the Office's connection with journalists, cultural figures, members of the "US friends" Society and YMCA members (*Young Man's Christian Association*), with Frank Shea as head of the department assisted by Florence (Chevy) Brown.

One of the Office's routine task was to prepare the general synthesis about Romania and, implicitly about the communist camp (Sherman Kent, 1949)⁷. Various loose and available information which existed in different public locations in Romania was collected, materials which were then sent to the American decision-makers in order to report in real time any discovered change which may have been of interest to the USA security in the Balkans. The American practice required that those newsletters included assessed information from: diplomatic offices in the territory, secret agents, business intelligence, news agencies. All of them were received by Washington, many of them being also sent to the *Library of Congress*, where there was a special department that made its own special country newsletters (Roger Hilsman⁸, 1959, p. 190). At the same time the reception and multiplication of the radio news was organized in order to be distributed both in political and the Mission's circles and of the Romanian press.

The head of the Information Office: according to the new organization established by Washington, Donald Carl Dunham was leading the US Legation's Information Office's entire activity, was keeping in touch with the Legation's Political Department, he reported to the State Department about the cultural activities undertaken by the Office in Romania, as well as about the anti-American campaign initiated by the Romanian authorities at the press, radio, cinema, theatre, publishing houses etc levels, countersigned the weekly summery and recommendations for *Voice of the United States* radio station's program, ensuring the relations with the media, academia, intellectuals and the members of the "US Friends" Society (ANIMV, FD 149, pp. 5-11). Donald Carl Dunham also reported on the cultural activity undertaken by the USSR, Britain, France etc. in Romania. Other duties

⁷ The country newsletters were some reports systematically reviewed. They contained extensive information on political, economical, military etc. problems, and were prepared for every country in the world. A description of these newsletters can be found at Sherman Kent (1949).

⁸ Roger Hilsman was an OSS-CIA officer in Burma (1944-1945), Great Britain (1950-1952), Vietnam (1962-1963).

concerned the organizing of the library's activity and that of the discs and documentaries stores, ordering of books, magazines, discs, and movies. In exercising these duties, the Office's head was assisted by the following departments and staff:

Secretariate: Nora Isabela Samuely worked here, acting as secretary and typist. She typed mail and reports, but the ones which were confidential were ascribed to the Legation's American typists. Ion Comşa was another employee, secretary, and interpreter, whose tasks were: to translate and summarize the "Voice of America" radio broadcasts' in English, translate technical documents (laws, conventions, platforms etc), collect anti-American press materials, monitor the cultural activities conducted in Romania by other diplomatic missions and data centralization for the activity reports. Ion Comşa also monitored the Romanian press, verified the reasons for suspension or suppression of newspapers. He kept a record of the American statesmen whose speeches were censored by the Romanian press, and if so, indicated the censored pages.

The library: the job of head librarian was that of Ioana Mavrocordat. Her tasks were: the classification and the registration of the received books and periodicals, suggesting the purchase of new books and periodicals, the coordination of the discs and documentary department, collecting statistical data on discs and library's activity, preparing the music listening and documentary viewing schedule. Other employees included Sandra Zaharescu Caraman and Calliope Ghinopol (librarian assistants) who supervised the reading rooms, registered the borrowings, sorted out the books, periodicals, and discs.

The administrative department: was led by George McDonald. The job's ascription: staff's coordination, the maintenance of the necessary equipments for the Office (the building, furniture, cleaning, gramophones, cars, central heating, duplicating machines), the purchase of office supplies and furniture, carrying around different payments, bookkeeping of the service's accounting, organizing photo exhibitions and country tours, organizing receptions and decorating the ball rooms. George McDonald also held the job of Office's Head deputy, having the following subordinates: Aurel Samoil, typist secretary, fulfilled almost all the jobs that were the responsibility of his chief; Nicolle Toroceanu, phone operator; Vasile Covaci, day doorkeeper; Nicolae Drăguţ, night doorkeeper, Constantin Pellecudis, courier and a kind of "jack of all trades", handled duplicating machines, sorted out newspapers collections etc.; Victor Ardeleanu, idem; Petre Pavlicovschi, Marcelo Fabian, Gheorghe Balaş – drivers; Anastasia Ştefan and Silvia Pavel – care-takers.

The press department: the head of this department was Serafim Buta (sometimes, Jeronim), Romanian – born American citizen (press attaché, former employee of the Office of Strategic Services). The job's description was: receiving, correcting, censoring, and the multiplication of the daily newsletter sent by Washington, local media reading and writing the Romanian press review, issuing a weekly summary of the events and press comments which was passed to the "Voice of America" along with suggestions regarding the programs adaptation to the circumstances, organizing the English translation of the confidential documents for the Legation, the distribution of written materials, photos and magazines to the Romanian press.

Since the Romanian authorities suspected that the American Legation was monitoring and gathering information material on Romania's involvement in supporting world communism, at some point Buta's clandestine operation was given away because he requested some centralized information from the intern press regarding the support of the "free Greek government" (an action which proved the involvement of the Romanian communist regime in supporting the Greek communists, an action likely to incriminate the international regime⁹). Therefore, the SSI leadership recommended that: "The American Legation's actions are to be overseen very carefully, in all the possible developments, since we inferred from the surveillance of this covert activities that a great deal of importance is placed upon the political informative network" (ANIMV, *FD 149*, p. 39).

Serafim Buta was assisted by Angela Lerianu, chief translator, who: was monitoring newspaper articles and was sending articles and news information that were to be included in the Romanian press review to be translated or summarized, checked and corrected the translations, established the emergency order and the page layout, sorted out and distributed the press material, all these in accordance with the head of the department's directives. Other subordinates of Serafim Buta were: Silvyia Placa, general translator, Ion Olănescu, translator, economic topics, Teresina Mendel, typist, was in charge of typing the Romanian press review, Irina Marinescu, typist, typed the English newsletter, Emil Homoceanu, Morse operator, received the English radio news, Oprea Ion wrote in shorthand the Romanian programs of the "Voice of America", worked from home.

Because of the connection to the editorial staff from the "Dreptatea" newspaper, or with Comşa Ion, George McDonald, and Constantin Mugur-

⁹ See also the involvement of the Romanian Communist Party in illegal supporting the French miners, *France: Soviet Pressure; Communist Labor* (Secret), Weekly Summary Excerpt, 26 Nov. 1948; <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/>.

Brener, Serafim Buta was deemed to be the key element in the preparation of the political materials intended for Lt. Col. Albert Seitz¹⁰ (Head of the Political Bureau of the American Military Mission). Until Roy Melbourne's departure¹¹ (October 1947), Serafim Buta often visited him to report on the collected political information. Buta was frequently reported at the US Legation, where he particularly met with Henry Leverich, the Legation's first counselor, Vaughn C. Ferguson, the Legation's second secretary, and with Parisella Henry, former secretary of Burton Berry (from May 1946, Parisella moved to the US Policy Mission). Though Buta's intellectual abilities were assessed by SSI as "poor", overall, his possibilities in gathering raw material on the public opinion trends in Romania were relatively high, being reported as receiving different visits, and therefore information, from the following sources: 1) Zaharnic, YMCA managing director, who because of his job was considered to be the collector of news and rumors from the members, 2) "US Friends" Society's members and leaders, who were in similar situations as that of Zaharnic, 3) the correspondents Williams Lawrence and Liviu P. Nasta from *New York Times* and Leonard Kirschen from *Associated Press* and 4) Journalists such as: Vernescu from „Căminul și Femeia”; dr. Bercovitz, former chief of the „Liberalul” newspaper; Leon Proca (*alias* Carp) and Manoliu from the former „Dreptatea” (PNT); Zurescu from „Liberalul”; dr. Flavius from „Timpul” or Adrian Ranta from „Semnalul”; N. Carandino, Emil Serghie and T.T. Braniște, who were friends with Frank Shea.

During the time when he was a sergeant in the US Army and conducted missions in the country, Serafim Buta has made connections in the country, amid members of the "US Friends" Society's branches, among them being professor Borza from Cluj and a certain Popa from Oltenița. Among Serafim Buta's intimate Romanian friends were Imperio Mateescu, his country relatives (Făgăraș and Dobrogea), various acquaintances made during his country travels, and various women, including Nina Mateevici and the famous singer Maria Tănase. Among the Americans, Buta was friend with Bruce Weldon (accounting clerk at the Legation, with whom he lived in the same apartment).

Referring to the indoctrination of the Romanian staff employed by the US Information Office, SSI reported the following findings: "The Romanian staff of the US Information Office does not exhibit a consistent and even political behavior. Contradictory attitudes appear which shows a lack of

¹⁰ In August 1944, Lieutenant Col. Albert Seitz conducted OSS operations in Yugoslavia supporting the Chetnik. See John Whiteclay Chambers II, *OSS Training in the National Parks and Service Abroad in World War II*, U.S. National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 2008, pp. 360-361.

¹¹ Roy Melbourne – Diplomatic Advisor and Foreign Affairs officer.

training and of political education from the staff. (...) All the pieces of clue say that the staff was recruited only by taking into consideration the technical and administrative requirements of the Office's organization, on condition that that the Romanian staff would not create indiscretions to the authorities. In this regard, the organization of both the Office and the Legation is prepared in such a way that what stands as a secret action is given only to the American officials, and this is because both the Office's leaders and the Legation's diplomatic agents are very careful because they understand the Romanian authorities' vigilance" (ANIMV, FD 149, pp. 27-28).

In order to ensure connections with the exterior and the centre from Bari (Italy), even during Frank Shea's time, the American Information Service managed the installation of three transceiver stations:

- 1) Batiștei Street Station from building no 33, the unit being used for the air routing of the US Air Force, station led by a certain Lieutenant Samuel;
- 2) Oțetari Street Station from building no 3, station which served as connection to the military headquarters in Europe;
- 3) the high power station installed on 9th of March 1946 in the Stănescu Hotel building, primary used by the US Diplomatic and Policy Mission, became operational under the leadership of the engineer Emil Homoceanu assisted by Czech engineer Klapka.

The radio newscasts were prepared by Emil Homoceanu and daily retrieved by Sergeant Stiff in order to be handed over to Frank Shea. As a security measure, Colonel Pierson Andersen, head of the American Mission's Transmissions Department, gave orders that the broadcasts should be made on the 45-47 m wavelength, to avoid being detected (AN, PCM-SSI, D. 43/1946). At the Radio Department, adjutant lieutenant Constantin Francis was also chief, engineer by profession, assisted by Sergeant Dan Lee, a radio specialist. Among other officials of the Media Department, SSI notes also mention Sergeant Charles Welch, residing at the US training camp "Stănescu", American sergeant Greenby, the radio – telegraph specialist. On 29th January 1947, col. Lloyd, also arrived general inspector in the US Army, and his aide Lieutenant Schonmacker (ANIMV, FD 51 685, f. 5). Then the SSI reports highlighted that the Americans were involved in the clandestine radio transmitter problem. In August 1947, the Romanian Second Security Service (*Serviciul II Siguranță*) has compiled a dossier in which the American Mission was accused of supplying building parts, emission lamps, diagrams etc in order to create a valuable information agency, able to communicate in all circumstances the data required by the US Service. Moreover, the Second Security Service announced its superiors that it would make a penetration action [into the US objective] through an informant who has a TFF – emission

device and who was recruited by the Romanian Counterintelligence (*Cartea Albă a Securității*, Vol. I (SRI, 1997) -The White Paper on Security, pp. 386 – 387).

The Staff's wages: the US Information Office's employees received payments ranging from 4500 to 14000 lei (1 dollar USA=150 new lei, 1947). They were paid by the Legation, where a state wages was signed, next to each name the account number was added. The highest wage, 13000 – 14000 lei, was that of the translator Ion Olănescu, since he was the Legation's earliest employee (working here since 1927). Silvy Placa and Ion Comșa were next with 10500 lei each, Mona Mavrocordat and Angela Lerianu each with about 9000-9500 lei, Nora Samuelly and A. Samoil each with 8000-8500 lei, Emil Homoceanu, Tereza Mendel, Sanda Karaman, Calliope Ghinopol and Torocanu Nicolle each with 6500-7500 lei, Miron Ionescu with 5000 lei, the doorkeepers and the drivers with 4000-4500 lei, and eventually the maids with 3500 lei each. Because the wages were insufficient, the Information Office asked the Center to raise them, but as the answer was being delayed, they resorted to additional "CARE" aid packages and cash loans. For example, during the 1947 Christmas, all employees received perks between 5000 and 20000 lei, depending on their wages and family difficulties.

The Information Office's material basis: they also had: 4 cars (with registration numbers: 136, 370, 436 and 432 C.D), 8 cinema projectors, 4 electric gramophones, 2 matrix multipliers, 2 short films and slides automatic projectors, 3 radio reception devices "Hallicrafter" (large type) used by Donald Dunham, Serafim Buta and Emil Homoceanu and one "Hallicrafter" (small type) (ANIMV, FD 149, pages 11-28).

The Information Office's connection with the Romanian circles

The relations between the Information Office's American officials and the Romanian circles were limited to a few journalists and different intellectuals. As long as the Office was led by Frank Shea (summer 1945 – winter 1946), these relationships were methodically established. Frank Shea often organized dinners at home or at "Capșa" where he particularly invited N. Carandino (from *Dreptatea*), Emil Serghie (*Momentul*), I. Zurescu (*Liberalul*), T.T. Braniște and Al Coller (*Jurnalul*). Seldom did he invite I. Christu – Plenipotentiary Minister, Mihail Ghelmegeanu, Savel Rădulescu, Sebastian Șerbescu (*Semnalul*), Liviu P. Nasta (*Jurnalul*), Guy Pauker (*United Press*), Emil Ottulescu (lawyer), the Papacostea brothers, Mihail Romniceanu (former Finance Minister), professor George Oprescu, Ionescu-Mihăiești, Ciuca etc. Besides them, US and foreign correspondents and the Information Office's British, American, and seldom Romanian officials also participated at Frank Shea's dinners. The Office organized several large receptions, for instance: the Christmas of 1945 and the Epiphany (Boboteaza) of 1946, as well as the

cinema avant-premieres in public halls, where tickets for the press and friends were distributed. In time, these presentations were canceled because of the censorship imposed by the communist regime.

During the period of time the Information Office was led by George McDonald as deputy (winter 1946 – spring 1947), the Office's social interactions gradually declined, even though attempts were made to maintain Frank Shea's tradition of organizing dinner with intimates. Florence Brown was the one who held several dinners always attended by McDonald and Serafim Buta. As the results were not at all encouraging, relationships went towards an end. Some causes that could be mentioned are: cuts in the representation funds, the dollar's purchasing power reduction, Dunham's desire to avoid political activities as well as the general political development (the United Nations Assembly, Maniu's lawsuit etc.).

In early 1948, the US Legation's Information Office's only connections to the Romanian press were:

1) the direct ones, maintained with the Bucharest newspapers, with the accredited journalists attending the library to ask for press material released by Serafim Buta's department: L. Paul (*Adevărul*), Munteanu (*Semnalul*), Paraianu (*Economistul*), Nedeleanu (*Universul*), Popovici (*Fapta*), Constanta Trifu (*Ultima Oră*), Pitar (*Finanțe și industrie*), Vernescu – Wexler (*Femeia și Căminul*), Duna (*Națiunea*), Brumaru (*Scânteia*) and Focșăneanu (*Ziarul Științelor și călătoriilor*);

2) The indirect ones, through American agencies and newspaper's correspondents who updated Donald Dunham and Serafim Buta on daily events: Williams Lawrence and Liviu P. Nasta¹² from *The New York Times* and Leonard Kirschen from *Associated Press*;

3) The sporadic ones, connections developed at the various receptions organized by the Ministry of Information, the Prime Minister or by the foreign legations (ANIMV, FD 149, pp. 29- 32).

Propaganda through exhibitions and movies. Since its establishment, the US Information Office organized various exhibitions on various themes. Among them was also the "Exhibition on Penicillin and Public Health" held by the Faculty of Medicine from Bucharest in the summer of

¹² Liviu Popescu Nasta, born April 1st 1891 in Brașov, was the Romanian correspondent of some influential Anglo-Saxon newspapers, preparing newsletters for Ivor Porter through whom he met Saint Brower, *New York Times*' Special Envoy. He introduced Nasta to Burton Berry, the American asking Nasta to prepare newsletters for the US Legation as well, handed to Roy Melbourne. Nasta was arrested by the communist authorities on 25th July 1949, died on 6th December 1956 in the Văcărești prison hospital, Nasta was information agent William Deakin's father-in-law, who became Winston Churchill's secretary.

1946, which was a real “success” among the Soviet Army personnel. In exchange for penicillin which was non-existent on the market, the Americans obtained various information from the Russian officers who treated their sexually transmitted diseases in the American consulting rooms. Under the pretext of observing formalities, the Soviets were interrogated by the US medical personnel regarding the full name of the units they belonged to and the location of their headquarters¹³. The success in Bucharest was reported to USFET (*United States Forces on European Theatre*), the other states members of the Allied Control Commission being advised to initiate a similar program (about “The Penicillin Case” see: Van Rensselaer, 1997).

A few months later the *Tennessee Valley* Exhibition followed at the School of Architecture. In the summer of 1947 the “Agriculture in America” Exhibition took place, at the Academy of Agriculture.

SSI closely monitored the US events, reporting to the communist regime that the organized exhibitions had free entrance, were accompanied by documentary movies presentations, which consequently contributed in an effective way to the American propaganda. Such exhibitions were also organized in the country, especially in Ardeal (Transylvania), where the YMCA (Young Man’s Christian Association) and the “US Friends” Society had branches. By taking advantage of these opportunities, George McDonald, Serafim Buta, Florence Brown, Constantin Zaharnic (YMCA) and Petre Grant (decorator painter) had the possibility to go to the country (ANIMV, FD 149, pp. 28-29).

In August 1946, SSI informed the communist authorities that the great American movie houses *Metro-Goldwin*, *Paramount*, *Universal*, *RKO*, *United-Artists*, *Columbia*, *20th Century Fox*, *Warner Bros* and *First National* formed a corporation to distribute the propaganda movies in Romania. Nicu D. Cazasis was appointed managing director of this corporation, owner of “RKO – Art Film”, who, after 23rd August 1944 kept permanent contact with the American Mission from Romania where “he agreed to prepare weekly reports on the Soviet penetration in the Romanian economy and particularly in the movie trade” (ASRI, „D”, 2595, pp. 317-318).

The Information Office’s connections to the Department of State, “The Voice of America” and the “Free Europe radio station”

In addition to monitoring “official” activities, the SSI body also dealt with the Office’s covert activity. In this respect, it is stated that “the

¹³ On 14th May 1946, Lt. Col. MD. Carol E. Krichbaum replaced Lt. Col. MD Eisen, sent to the Martial Court for selling on the market a large quantity of Penicillin intended for the US Military.

Information Office's leader members created certain connections in the pro-British circles from Romania, among which they conduct a skillful propaganda campaign and lobby, in order to manipulate certain opinion trends in the country as well as to obtain the necessary information to inform the US Government, activity which involves the whole organization of the Office. (...) On the whole, the material collected through these infiltrations is sent in order to provide information the Romanian broadcasts of the *Voice of America* radio station [JBCREOLE – was the cryptonym used by the SSU/CIA for "The Voice of America", our note], broadcasts aimed against the political regime in Romania, the rest of the information being used by the Legation in writing reports for the Department of State" (ANIMV, FD 149, pp. 33-39). SSI stated that the US Information Office's department heads had, in one way or another, direct or indirect connections both with "The Voice of America" radio station in New York and with the Department of State. With the famous radio station the connection was made directly, whereas with the Department of State the connection was established through the US Legation.

CIA classified documents confirm that very important decisions were made in Washington during that time. The Office of Special Operations (OSO) and, afterwards the Office of Politics Coordination led by Frank Wisner, were ordered to directly and heavily engage in establishing and financing *the National Committee for a Free Europe, Inc.* (NCFE), a clandestine propaganda institution designed to plan and coordinate psychological warfare actions against USSR and the communist regimes in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania (http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000104823/DOC_0000104823.pdf). CIA reports are quite explicit, stating that: "*Radio Free Europe* broadcast policy aims to encourage the release from captivity of those people, the hope to regain national and all individual freedoms, the discouragement of the communist regimes and nomenclatures, the opening of communication channels with the imprisoned people beyond the Iron Curtain, as well as to transmit spiritual and Western democratic values to the states which hope to be free again" (http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000238874/DOC_0000238874.pdf).

Frank Wisner, a person who knew well the field and the players, had a key role within the *National Committee for a Free Europe* project. He showed that the *Radio Free Europe's* policy's goal was to show to the Soviet satellite nations that the United States of America is the champion of democracy and the leader of the free world against communist totalitarianism. Through its broadcasts, Wisner continues, *Radio Free Europe* addresses to an audience that include about 69 million people, which, according to CIA's most accurate intel, has about 3.1 million receivers able to pick up the radio station on short and medium wavelength (<http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/>

DOC_0001137561/DOC_0001137561.pdf). Seven people were working at that time for the Romanian department of the "Radio Free Europe Station". The *National Committee for a Free Europe Project* had been designed as a form of anti-communist propaganda, which not only did not cease, but also intensified after the war. As early as March 1944, the OSS's R&A department warned that USSR's foreign propaganda broadcasts amounted to a total of 70 hours daily in over 25 languages. About 77% of their broadcasting time (50 hours) focused on the European countries, about 7% (5 hours) on North America, 4 and a half hours on the Middle East and about 3 hours on the Far East (www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/oss/).

NCFE started by implementing its objectives within the "Radio Free Europe Station" and "Radio Liberty" in Munich, an operation that was conducted by Wisner himself (McLuhan, *An Urgent Whisper*, 1950). There were also "Barbara" broadcasts which used a small mobile transmission complex located in a former *Luftwaffe* base in Lampertheim, West Germany. Among the first broadcasts of Radio Free Europe (RFE) were also those intended for Romania on July 14th, 1950.

According to Walter Smith, *Director of Central Intelligence*, the radio station's broadcast included news, information and policy analysis, designed to prepare peoples from the communist zone for the "D" day. The musical programs contained national creations of some composers criticized by the communist regime, especially folk music reminiscent of the days before the Soviet occupation. There were special programs for celebrating certain local heroes or prohibited historical events. The US current events were discussed within talk shows, being interpreted as viewpoints with a hidden meaning and significance that should stirred the interest of the population so that they could fight against communism. The religious programs spiritually supported and gave reason for the audience's resistance against Kremlin's atheist programs. RFE's one of the most dramatic activities was to denounce informants and traitors. People who collaborated with the communist secret police, who was responsible for arresting anticommunist fighters, were identified. As a result, communist informants were ostracized by their neighbors and community (www.foia.cia.gov/best-of-crest/CIA-RDP80B01676R0040000700328.pdf).

In august 1950, the radio station's broadcasts could have been heard in Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria as well. Four years later, a top secret Department of State report stated that the organizations: "The Free Europe Committee and Radio Free Europe Station are political instruments of propaganda and psychological warfare under CIA's control and the direct supervision of the US Department of State" (Cummings, *A Peek into the Intelligence Bordello of American Cold War Radio Broadcasting*, July 2009). In

1969 CIA described the two radio stations as: "The oldest, the largest, the most expensive, and probably the most successful undercover operations conducted against the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. (...) From 1949 until 1971 [when CIA stopped the financing] thousands of people worked for these radio stations, the American taxpayers paid over 465 million dollars, however the American government's real financial contribution remained to this day shrouded in mystery and intrigue" (<http://www.historytimes.com/fresh-perspectives-in-history/20th-century-history/cold-war/>).

Neculai Constantin Munteanu, aware of these realities, highlighted that, when it came to the information sources used by "The Free Europe", the diplomats from the US Embassy in Bucharest were by far the most important, and they were regarded by the radio station's management as: "The safest and most effective source whose data were used in the Romanian department's broadcasts without being checked first". According to Munteanu, another information gathering method was related to the frequent meetings between the radio station's collaborators and the American diplomats stationed in Romania among whom there was a "mutual advantageous" information exchange.

In terms of organization, the *National Committee for a Free Europe's* activity was divided in six departments, all coordinated by Frank Wisner's OPC:

1) *Division of Exile Relations* (or *National Councils Division*) – a department which worked with the national "exiled" and refugees organizations from Central and South East Europe, whom it assisted and supported. Another task of this department was the training programs on various "issues", for these organizations' leaders.

2) *Radio Free Europe Station*.

3) *The Division of Intellectual Cooperation* – conducted various projects for the academia, cooperating with *Library of Congress*.

4) *The Research and Publications Service* – department where researchers coming from the USSR satellite states were employed, who, under the coordination on an US editorial staff: monitored, collected, developed, analyzed and disseminated various information of interest for peoples in the communist sphere (propaganda). The program had three components: news from beyond the Iron Curtain, mass-media contacts and newsletters in national languages.

5) *The Crusade for Freedom, Inc* – separated from the propaganda department, was responsible of organizing conferences, printing materials and disseminating movies.

6) *The General Administration* – dealt with identifying and recruiting the necessary staff for the Committee's various departments (http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000429923/DOC_0000429923.pdf).

Epilogue

On March 6th, 1950, the USA Government through US Secretary in Bucharest Rudolf Schoenfeld, addressed the Romanian Government asking for details about the reasons for closing the US Information Office in Bucharest. In response, the Government of the Romanian People's Republic's (RPR) stated that the US Information Office was established as US Legation's annex organization in Bucharest, providing books to certain Romanian subjects, "hostile elements to the Romanian people". On May 13th, 1950 Rudolf Schoenfeld sent a telegram to the US Department of State, where he presented the Romanian authorities' response regarding the US Legation's functioning issue in Bucharest: "In connection to the visa problem of the US Legation's staff, the RPR Government reminds the US Government that the number of the US Legation's staff currently present in Bucharest is several times higher than it had been before the war, given the fact that between 1936 – 1937 the US diplomatic personnel at the Legation in Bucharest consisted of 6 members, including the Minister accredited at the same time in Athens and Belgrade, where he also had permanent residence. Today, after the war, given that the majority of the US personnel should have left the country since the work within the Allied Control Commission had already finished, we acknowledge the fact that the US Legation's staff consists of 53 members. (...) Therefore, the large number of the Legation's members cannot be considered anything but a symbol of the hostile policy led by the US Government towards the RPR, which is manifested in espionage activities in which some members of the US Legation in Bucharest were involved, as proved by the high treason trials of the National Peasant Party's former leaders, of the Auschnitt – Popp - Bujoiu network, of the conspirator' gangs and of the American and British spies groups of the Information Office, who repeatedly tried to interfere in RPR's internal affairs by initiating some libelous attacks and providing official support to all the traitors who fled from the RPR and showed a hostile attitude towards RPR's interests both in the USA as well as in the United Nations. (...) For all these reasons the RPR's Government demands the US Legation in Bucharest to reduce its staff to a maximum number of 10 people, a number equal to the number of the members of the Romanian Legation in Washington". Signed: [Rudolf] Schoenfeld, Bucharest, May 13th, 1950 (<http://images.library.wisc.edu/FRUS/Edocs/1950v04/reference/frus.frus1950v04.i0015.pdf>).

A month before, the trial of: "The traitors and spies group which have worked in the US and British Legation's Information Offices" had begun. The defendants were: Constantin Mugur, Anny Samuelly, Eleonora Bunea-Wied, Liviu Popescu Nasta and Nora Samuelly.

Referring to this trial, Frank Wisner's daughter Elizabeth Hazard wrote in her PhD paper that Anny and Nora Samuelly confessed to having known the details of the opposition leaders' evacuation plans and to having used their relationships to provide information on the Soviet troop movement to Burton Berry, Roy Melbourne and their successor Rudolf Schoenfeld. Anny Samuelly admitted to have been recruited to work for the British agent Ivor Porter, as early as 1944, and to have received from him small amounts of arms and ammunition which she hid for the resistance fighters. Both sisters admitted to have understood that the political and cultural general information they provided would have been used by the BBC and "The Voice of America" broadcasts for Romania. Donald Dunham, USIS's managing director, told Nora Samuelly that *The Voice of America*: "was an efficient weapon for encouraging illegal groups and causing riots in Romania" (Hazard, „Magazin istoric”, no. 8 and no. 9/1996).

The indictment showed that the US and British Information Offices was the meeting place between the informative agents and the ones incriminated above, who served as Anglo-American espionage residents. According to the "Scânteia" newspaper, the Offices were accused of: "spying all the fields of the Romanian state's activity, everything related to the development of the democratic regime, to the acts of government, or to the country's organizational or security measures". There were accusations of undermining and even of violent overturning of the "democratic regime" established in Romania, organized activities guided and led by the chiefs of the Press and Information Offices and members of the Anglo-American Legations. Constantin Mugur and Anny Samuelly mentioned all the BIO's Chiefs (British Information Office): Ivor Porter, John Bennett, Francis Bennett Marchant. Nora Samuelly mentioned the ones of USIS: Frank Shea and Donald Dunham. One of the reports was prepared by Liviu Popescu Nasta, who might have given "political information about an attempted burglary of the British Labour Parties' units, action planned by Titel Petrescu and his henchmen". Constantin Mugur also confessed that in order to collect information: "Mr. Bennett also used the direct system for collecting information during his journeys in the country. I can give as an example in this regard the journey that John Bennett made by car in Transylvania to collect information in August 1947. After the journey, John Bennett prepared a report which he sent to London. Others members of the British Legation took such journeys. (...) The American Legation's spy Buta took such a trip as well" (Scânteia, no. 1.710 from 15th April 1950).

A special chapter of the indictment was named *Breaking the working class' unity*. Anny Samuelly and Liviu Nasta were nominated. Samuelly's statement highlights that John Bennett (who was the British Labour Government's representative) had three goals: 1) to have information as accurate as possible on the Romanian Social Democratic Party's activities, 2) to maintain a connection between the latter and the British Labour Party and 3) to prevent by all means its inclusion in the Romanian Communist Party (PCR). She went on with the following confession: "In Reșița, Bennett had long conversations with Iosif Mustețiu, Eftimie Gherman and other social democrats whose right-wing tendencies were known. In order to prevent the merger, in the summer of 1947 Bennett specially invited Morgan Phillips, the Labour Party's General Secretary, and Sam Watson, president of the British Miners' Union, delegating me as permanent interpreter. He introduced them to Titel Petrescu, Adrian Dimitriu, Eftimie Gherman, Hromadka, Mustețiu and others. During the conversations I personally witnessed as interpreter, Phillips advised them on the necessity for a more assertive attitude which should prevent the merger with the Communist Party. Titel Petrescu, Adrian Dimitriu, Gherman, Hromadka, Mustețiu assured Phillips that they would fight in whatever way to prevent the merger from happening" (<http://istoriabanutului.wordpress.com/2009/06/17/mircea-rusnac-un-proces-stalinist-implicand-agenti-imperialisti-evrei-si-social-democrati-resiteni-1950/>).

Therefore the list of defendants presented by the prosecutor at the indictment contained a multitude of the diplomatic staff's names that were at that moment in Bucharest. Le Rougetel (former head of the political mission), General E.R. Greer (former Chief of Staff of the Military Mission), Ivor Porter (former head of BIO), Captain (Rhyt) Key, Robinson, Ramsden (former military attaché deputy), Hoggarth, Cleaver, Boodman, Kendall, Munro, Faure, Springfield, Holman (England's former minister in Bucharest), John Bennett (former head of BIO), Francis Bennett Marchant, Sarrell (former Special Advisor) were nominated from Great Britain. Burton Berry (former head of the political mission), Roy Melbourne (the Legation's former First Secretary), Henry Leverich (the Legation's former adviser), Donald Dunham (former head of the USAIS), Sam (Serafim) Buta, Kohler, Hale (?)¹⁴, George McDonald. Pierre Boullen was added to this list, former French consul in Timișoara were named

¹⁴ It is likely to be Lt. Col. Oron J. Hale mentioned by Interdepartmental *Committee for Acquisition of Foreign Publications*, Meeting of 16th March 1945, Confidential, approved for declassification on March 2008; Reproduced from MSS collections, Lib. of Congress; http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0001524346/DOC_0001524346.pdf, accessed 11th December 2010.

From the America. Other names had already been “exposed” on other occasions, especially during the Iuliu Maniu and Popp-Bujoiu trials, such as: Thomas Hall, Ira Hamilton, Vaughn Ferguson, Sam Watson, Bill Young, John Lovell, Frank Shea etc.

The prosecutor’s conclusion was as follows: “It is clear that we are not facing some isolated actions, but those of an organized work system within which it is difficult to tell where the diplomatic activity begins and where the espionage ends”. In their turn, the officious newspaper “Scântea” wrote: “Who were the active agents of the British and American Information Offices? Anny and Nora Samuelly, the offsprings of a banker and landowner; Eleonora Bunea-Wied a relative of the Hohenzollern leeches family and the daughter of the former King of Albania; Nasta, Deakin’s father in law, the secretary of the wicked warmonger Churchill; Mugur, by all means greedy for fortune – all representatives of the reactionary classes in office, filled with the wildest hatred against the working people and against its democratic regime” (*Scântea*, no. 1.720 from 27th April 1950).

The US Information Office’s activity continued to be blamed and two years later a material entitled: *Collection of Materials Related to the Criminal Activity of the Imperialist Intelligence Services on the Territory of the Romanian People’s Republic* was published, where the Bucharest authorities violently exposed the staged trials of the Romanian National Peasant Party’s leaders as well as the “Auschnitt-Pop-Bujoiu gang of conspirators, spies and saboteurs”, highlighting Frank R. Shea’s role in the “act of sabotage against traitors and the plotters convicted in these trials”. This material, published by the Political General Direction, the Romanian Ministry of Interior, accused the US Information Office that through the books, newspapers, movies, and other organized events reactionary concepts and racial discrimination had been spread which contained libels against freedom and peace-lover countries and peoples and had openly incited to war. That the political newsletter published by this Office has solely served these purposes. The investigations had established that the defendants, devoted to the Anglo-American imperialist interests, undertook, with the support of the Anglo-American Missions and Legations, an act of high treason. Anny Samuelly and Liviu Nasta have “confessed” that they had handed the Anglo-American Legations reports on the state of the front, the oilfields situation, briefings about troop movements and reactionary illegal organizations, information concerning the state’s organization and the ministries’ work etc. Nora Samuelly “revealed” that some of the information went “where it was needed” and the rest was used for “The Voice of America” radio station. Donald Dunham would have told her that “The Voice of America” is one of the means of maintaining the psychological warfare (*Culegere de materiale...* 1952, pp. 39-49).

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