

**Book Review**  
**CARMEN BANȚA, “VOICE OF ROMANIANS AT RADIO  
VATICAN (1968-1974). DOCUMENTS FROM THE ARCHIVE. LA  
VOCE DEI ROMENI ALLA RADIO VATICANA (1968-1974).  
DOCUMENTI DI ARCHIVIO”**  
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### **1. Introduction**

If we conduct an opinion poll on the Vatican radio station, we find it the most probably, not many fellow citizens have knowledge of its existence. And even those who have heard more or less tangentially by its existence, a smaller part probably understands the relevance of this program for the preservation and promotion of Romanian identity. From the 4th cover of the book on which will be presented below, we find out that the Vatican Radio Department of Romania issued in 1947, being among the top 10 language programs that delivered linguistic messages, to which, according to the socio-political context, and lectures with a strong cultural character. In the following, we will review some professional milestones defining the professional route of the author, and we will present the relevance of the quoted study for the native and universal culture in general and for the humanities sciences from the Romanian academic environment in particular.

### **2. Some words about the author of the paper**

Mrs. Carmen Banța is a lecturer at the University's Faculty of Letters from Craiova, her academic interests covering an impressive epistemic area: folk culture, folklore, anthropology, Romanian language and literature, etc. The paper *Voice of the Romanians at Vatican Radio (1968-1974)* records a part of the research done by the author at Accademia di Romania in Rome, Italy and in the archives of the radio station, a concern that materialized in the editing of numerous articles and books and the support of scientific communications in which it was brought to the fore the documentary relevance of the lectures delivered to Vatican Radio during the Romanian Communism, relevance too little known or underestimated so far.

In fact, from this resides the original and innovative character of the paper. It is not a simple compilation of texts, as one might think, but the fruit of a lasting research designed to bring to the debate the importance of another

communication channel which crossed the Iron Curtain in those troubled years besides the well-known, and, in my opinion, overcrowded in many ways ,Free Europe.

### **3. Whom it is addressed to**

Although he does not deny the scientific style, the conceptual, methodological and reasoning requirements the work is written in a particularly accessible style not only for the academic environment, but also for the general public with an average level of education. One feature is the impossibility of framing the work in a well-defined epistemic field: it is not only a work of ethnology, as it is not only a work of social history. It is a useful tool for any historian, folklorist, anthropologist, sociologist, philosopher or literary concerned about the dynamics of value orientations in the Romanian society in full communism, the historical radiography of that period, or the near-fidelity surprise monograph of the profile of a cultural figure of the height of Ovidiu Bârlea, to which the author granted a privileged place in the economy of the present paper. The interdisciplinary and intersystem approach finds itself justification and thematic diversity of the texts transmitted to the Vatican Radio, which did not cover by far Western dogmatics and ecclesiology issues.

### **4. Structure and content**

The Foreword gives us, among other things, the goal assumed by the author: We will try through this study to highlight the documentary value of texts that translate spiritual fragments of identity of the Romanian space, over six years, between 1968-1974. (Banta, 2015, pg.6). A notable aspect of material structuring is thematic organization and not chronological content, and avoiding redundant interpretations and speculation, which, in the case the work of other humanist writers only adds to the quantity against quality gnoseological relevance. We are further introduced into Vatican history through the texts of Professor Mircea Popescu (chapter about the Vatican) and in the history of the radio station (chapter Vatican Radio. The program in Romanian - short history). The next four chapters have it in the foreground Monsignor Octavian Bârlea: Monsignor Octavian Bârlea - bibliobiographical profile; Rite,culture and religion in the conception of Monsenior Octavian Barlea; Monsignor Octavian Bârlea and the issue of ecumenism; Șerban Cantacuzino and Constantin Brâncoveanu in the vision of Monsenior Octavian Bârlea. The following chapter, Family - Socio-Anthropological Approach, treats synthetically and analytically a series of lectures on psycho-socio-anthropological topics from the family institution: the division of roles in the family, the issue of divorce, the transmission of culture to and through the family, people and family, parent-child, family and monk report, marriage issue, women's mission, etc.

All these subheadings are interpreted in the key to Christian spirituality. On the pillars of this spiritualities and the particular forms of manifestation that they wear in the Romanian space are spoken broadly in the next chapter, titled suggestively "Sequences of Romanian spirituality".

The lectures presented in this chapter focuses on topics such as the substrate of Christianity Romanian, Romanian language formation, Romanian poetry, culture and religion in the Romanian space, etc. In what follows we are presented a synthesis of the study in Italian which is very useful for Catholic Christians who do not master the Romanian language, the abstract of the work in English and an impressive selection of texts in Romanian language, scanned from the original documents in the archive.

### **5. Monsignor Octavian Bârlea - symbol of the Romanian resistance**

Famous historian and Catholic theologian, Octavian Bârlea, as an exponent of the Romanian exile, becomes leader of the Romanian community in Munich, playing an important cohesive role among the communities of Romanian refugees from Germany, Italy and beyond. Editor-in-Chief of the Vatican Radio station, the eminent thinker represented in the second half of the previous century one of the bridges between the Romanians from the Socialist Republic of Romania, the Romanians from Bessarabia and the Romanian communities in Bessarabia Diaspora, isolated for political reasons. Interpenetration of the Western spirit with the national-revolutionary one (Ibidem, 2015, pg. 32), as the author characterizes it, gave the audience real courses of theological, historical and anthropological culture, excelling on the one hand by the eloquence and clarity of the transmitted messages, and, on the other hand, by the perfume of Transylvania. By browsing the pages of this book, I can not not to notice the identity complexity of this character: the brother of the folklorist Ovidiu Bârlea, the renowned theologian does not hesitate to promote the mioritic cultural profile, but removing it from the reductionism Orthodox to place it in a wider spiritual context, that of Christianity, which is not necessary Orthodox.

### **6. Sociological significance**

When it comes to radio functions, as general media functions, most communication science specialists tend to rely on the function of information, persuasive function, educational function, social function, and entertainment function. Categorical, the Romanian department of the Vatican Radio station, in the bad period of national communism fulfilled all the classical functions of radio communication. Information and education were achieved through rich lectures in informative content, which, thanks to editor-in-chief Octavian Bârlea, summaries of religion-related issues; the persuasion targeted the

motivation and awareness of the Romanians on the origin and values that unite them, and through the socialization function, albeit somewhat latent, it was outlined and preserved the relative sinality of those who spoke and felt Romanian. But the sociological importance of this communication channel can not be reduced to these functions. Leaving aside the functionalist approach, I consider the importance of the Romanian department of Radio Vatican Radio it is rather an actionist approach. The meaning, more or less assumed by participants in the social action in question was not just about informing, but about how to keep a series of symbols, units of significance threatened by the dominant political ideology that had been established in Romania.