

## VATICAN RADIO STATION IN ROMANIAN (SOCIAL MESSAGES)-1968-1971<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *This study brings into focus some thematic and social programs in Romanian of Radio Vatican between the years 1968-1971. Much of the lectures are supported by Monsignor Octavian Barlea. The approach of the social programs is due to the reorientation of the Catholic Church to the modern world determined by the the Vatican Council (II). The themes are actual, meditative and full of social meanings.*

**Key words:** *Vatican Radio, message, society.*

The most important media sources have proved to be, over time, that are the radio and television. They work together, completing each other, but each of them has its own well known position in audiovisual media. But, it is true that radio journalists had to revise their own genre based on the influence of television. Over time, radio announcers were forced to renew their texts in order to compete with television.

Vatican Radio, as an instrument of social and traditional communication, has, as its main goal, the transmission of the message of the Catholic Church through the proclamation of Gospel in the whole world.

The primary purpose of Radio Vatican is to promote the biblical message in the social world, to highlight and contextualize some aspects reported to certain situations, specific events of communities, countries, regions of the Christian world, constantly emphasizing the authority of the Holy See through the legitimate voice of the Pope.

So, spreading the words and teachings of the Pope, providing information about the activities of the Holy See, the transmission of the

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Catholic life in the world, the tendency to evaluate and to find solutions to specific problems of the time are the basics of the radio over time.<sup>1</sup>

Vatican Radio Department in Romanian language is among the top ten programs that had, over time, a task not easy, that of combining strict religious programs with the socio-cultural which needed to be designed according to historical contexts.

So, in March 1947,<sup>2</sup> Vatican Radio broadcasted in Romanian. The period was quite cloudy, the Peace Conference of Paris was over in October 1946 and the treaty through which were made territorial adjustments, anticipating in this way the raising of the "Iron Curtain" was signed. On this occasion, Pope Pius XII delivered a speech to the churches that were to remain behind the "Iron Curtain", speech which was translated by the rector of the Romanian Royal Academy in Rome, Peter Panaitescu and transmitted on the radio, in March 1947.

At Radio Vatican, over time, there have been numerous religious figures, Romanian immigrants hierarchs, Greek Catholic or Roman Catholic priests who assumed the role of announcers. At first regular, experimental broadcasts were transmitted, which later became weekly.

The first speaker and the first head of the Romanian editorial was Monsignor Pamfil Carnatiu<sup>3</sup> which, together with Bishop Basil Cristea<sup>4</sup> officiated the Liturgy every Sunday and on important holidays at the chapel of the Radio Vatican, which had become, for those in the country, a true radio of freedom.

This liturgy on radio waves arrived not only to the Catholic believers from Romania, but also to the Romanians in Bessarabia.

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<sup>1</sup> Federico Lombardi, *Gli 80 anni della Radio Vaticana e il "rapido sviluppo" delle comunicazioni sociali* in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Libreria editrice vaticana, Città del Vaticano, n.3879, 2011, p.549

<sup>2</sup> In the same year it was transmitted for the first time in Czech language

<sup>3</sup> He was born on 17 October 1919, in Cisteiu of Mures, Alba, in the Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Fagaras and Alba Iulia. After secondary school studies in Blaj, was sent to the Pontifical College Pio Inglese in Rome, where he finished his studies during the war. He was ordained priest on 25 March 1945. The communist regime in our country, persecution and suppression of the Greek Catholic Church led him to remain in the "free world". He died on September 7, 2009, in Rome, and was buried at Prima Porta cemetery in Rome.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop for the Romanians Greek Catholics of the Diaspora was born on February 24, 1906 in the village of Mureș Șomoștelnic. He graduated Highschool "Vasile cel Mare" and Theological Academy in Blaj. He was ordained as a catholic priest on March 27, 1932 Order of Augustinian Assumption (AA). Between 1947-1950, he served as rector of the College Pio Inglese Rome.

Although Orthodox, many of them were listening the Catholic Liturgy in Romanian at Vatican Radio, because in the churches between Prut and Nistru the services were committed in Russian.

The theme of the Vatican Radio's programs suffered transformations over time, depending on the religious and socio-political context. Interesting is the immediate period after "the Second Vatican Council", when there was a change of religious mentality. The Catholic Church has acquired a greater openness to the world, becoming a socially or ecumenical promoter. A crucial moment to attract the proletariat through radio broadcasts which transmitted, along with religious themes, also social subjects, which were necessary to the audience.

Of course that the editorial in Romanian imposed a thematic change of the programs. It is interesting to analyze the period of 1968-1974, a period when at the desk of the news editor was Monsignor Octavian Barlea<sup>1</sup> (a referential name of the Romanian diaspora in exile) along with Monsignor Pamfil Carnatiu, Professor Mircea Popescu, Priest Flavius Propan, cleric and historian of the United Church, Alexandru Mircea, priest Alexandru Tocanel<sup>2</sup> or engineer Cornel Crisan, Vasile Ilea, Menchinelli, Pittini (persons who ensured the transmission).

Consulting the existing material in the editorial archive I could select several social programs which were transmitted during this period.

In the program of December 3, 1969, at 7:30 p.m., at Vatican Radio, presented by Mircea Popescu, helped by Menchinelli and Pittini, it was proposed the following theme: Children are always victim of

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<sup>1</sup> The brother of the folklorist Ovidiu Birlea, Octavian Birlea was born on May 5 1913, in the town Mogos, Alba. He attended university studies at "Theological Academy in Blaj" (1930-1934). In 1937, in order to complete his studies, is sent to Rome. Since 1945 and until 1952 was appointed General Priest of Vatican Mission for the Romanians in Germany (FRG) and Austria. In the period between 1954-1955 is sent to Paris where he served as Vice President of the Romanian Catholic Mission and missionary for the Romanians of Latin Rite from France. Returns to Rome in 1956 and for almost three years, from 1957 to 1960 is the chief of the Romanian section at Vatican Radio. In August 1961 Octavian Barlea goes back to Germany, at the Good Shepherd convent nuns in Munich, then from November 1, 1964 served as vicar ad tempus in Germering near München. After 8 years, when he returns from the missions entrusted to him by the Vatican, returns to Vatican Radio, as chief editor between 1968-1973. The Vatican names him from 1973 to 1977 "apostolic visitor", for the 17 Romanian Greek-Catholic dioceses in USA. During 1978-2003 he was named Rector of the Romanian Mission united with Rome in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Commented years in a row the Gospel every Sunday at Vatican Radio.

divorce. We will try to insert the topic of the lecture, which, through message, transmits concern and hostile attitude of the church toward divorce and its consequences on children over time.

Thus, following the approval by the Italian Parliament of the law project Fortuna referring to the introduction of the divorce in Italy, in the society occurred two different attitudes. The partisans of the divorce were political groups that did not take into account the results of surveys, reports and investigations on the actual situation of the Italian family that merely denounce the disastrous consequences of such a victory. Supporting the group which was against the divorce are also coming the investigations answered by several prominent figures in Italian medical world, including teachers Bruno Callier, at the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Rome and Adriano Ossicini from the same university, which revealed that many of nervous and mental disorders are the result of emotional deprivation in early childhood. The dismantling of family, especially when it occurs in the first five to six years of child's life is reflected on an important aspect of his character: the child is no longer sure of himself. For a balanced development, children need psychological presence of the two parents and a clear and harmonious family life. The introduction of divorce would cause an increase in the cases of psychological insecurity among young people. Children from divorced families bear the burden of a sense of inferiority for the rest of their lives. Neurosis, insecurity and loneliness are the three negative components of raising children in such families – see prof. Callieri. For a “prophylaxis” of the family, prof. Ossicini proposes the formula of a prematrimoniale mental hygiene and psychological control of the pairs who are preparing to marry. In the case of any crises in the family life psychiatrist and psychologist are ways to overcome them.

If in the early years (1968-1971) this social theme is sporadically and “fragile” inserted in the texts with a religious character, but also a cultural one. In the middle of 1971, Monsignor Octavian Barlea will launch a suite of programs which show the role of the family in the modern society.

Programs such as: *The family – community community; The family – community culture; The family – factor of social life; The foundation of family life; The family's problems – mother's mission, People and family, Family education; Family and monasticism; Between modernism and traditionalism; Final thoughts on the problem of marriage*

transmit religious thought transposed by a social message necessary to the listeners' requirements.

Monsignor Barlea tries to address to the audience through not a very elevated speech, but deep and meditative. The language is accessible with small clumsiness of expression, given by the fact that the Romanian language, became in time a "second language" for him.

Therefore, in the program *The family – community life* of January 22, 1971 he meditates on the idea of education in the family which develops a "minor culture", necessary to the development of the individual's personality. Monsignor Octavian Bârlea believes that "the family is the foundation of the individual and social life, as God established by its laws. It is the basic unit of any society. Every human society must start from the family, or presume family. State itself - whatever the form of government - must recognize the priority of the family in the transmission and preservation of life, i.e. to acknowledge the foundation of society. "

There were healthy currents and sick currents. But the red wire which dominated the development of mankind, was the monogamy. Of course there were wrong forms as well, because in the history the sin also has its place. In other words, the history was not only about rise and falling, but also about ruin – ruin of the families and people. This ruin proves that it exists a scale of values. The family is, of course, influenced by the social and economical structure of the society. Political forms had and still have influence on the families. But the influence and authority of the political structure is legitimate only to a point. There is a limit: the limit of life. At the end of the program concludes: "The family is the ultimate security, the last protection. Of it increases life, in it the soul's wounds are healed, it gives encouragement for life. In other words, it is a community life."

A week later he comes back on the topic in the program *The family – community culture* of January 29. Culture, in terms of Monsignor, "is dialogue, the conversation that is born of dialogue. The first call, from soul to soul, is that between man and woman, between husband and wife. They change their thoughts, feelings, plans, decisions. They usually look at things from different angles, opening new horizons and enriching the soul, on the one hand with attitudes of men, and on the other hand with attitudes of humanity. In the family are known the qualities and the defects: the mistakes are corrected and the

achievements are encouraged. But those who benefit the most from the family's cultural frame are the children. They receive from parents not only food for the body, in the long years of growth, but also spiritual food. From their parent they learn to walk and speak." He makes an incursion into the past and thinking of Romanian history, so tested over the centuries, he believes that: "the family and only the family, was the one which kept for so long the Romanian culture" and transmitted until today the dowry of ancient cultures.

On February 5, 1971, Monsignor Barlea, in his speech *The family – a factor of social life*, argues that: "the family and the society are two entities that should complement each other. Both are needed. And both have their own mission, or rather said, one's mission is merged with the other's mission. There is a land, of course, where these two communities, the small one and the big one, meet each other. But the meeting must take place with mutual respect so that each part must feel favored by the other".

In the program *The foundation of family life* of April 23, 1971 Monsignor believes that love has many meanings "from the sublime to the despicable". Ensuring the love must not be found in the "accumulation of money or wealth, because it is known that the goods especially when there are too many can suffocate happiness. Constancy and fidelity in love need an opening to the sky." At the end of the speech he concludes that: "we need to focus on God, especially when it comes to children."

On May 28, 1971 in the speech *Family's problems – mother's mission*, argues that her strength to live for others makes her remain the "luminous figure in memory of the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren". She lives through others and is able to forget himself. He sees the woman not only indoors but also in her social manifestations in the community, to ensure the material life of the family. He sees the woman on several levels: she can also develop political activities, accounting functions, for example, minister, prime minister or queen.

In the program which speaks about People and family of June 11, 1971, Monsignor Octavian Barlea believes that the family is part of the big community, is part of the state. It should stand to help families, especially the numerous. They must "be respected, to be part of the elite life, because it has the power to give to others." Between people and families must therefore be an organic unity, "cemented through large

understanding and love. This is the main condition of the social progress”.

In the program *Family education*, from June 18, 1971 Monsignor Barlea believes that "the first and most essential education of children, following the order established by God, is in the family. Educating can be a burden, but is at the same time, a relief, a release; may be cause for worry, but it is also a source of happiness." Octavian Barlea considers that: "for parents to educate is more an art that comes from the heart. Man doesn't grow by instincts, but must be helped for years by his parents and the people around him. So the man, rather said the young, needs help not only to increase the body but also for the development of the soul. A harmonious education, which is extended from the cares of the body to the soul, as it should be in the family, can not avoid the problem of faith in God. Even where the environment contributes greatly to the religious formation of children, family retains the primary place in religious education. Moreover the role of the family increases when it comes to frame the family life in an atmosphere without religion."

Two weeks later, Monsignor Bârlea was back with another interesting topic: Family and monasticism, issue of July 2, which is based on a general question "is good for a man to marry or not? For both answers can be true or false reasons." Thus "the man must not be guided by selfishness neither when he decides to marry, nor when he decides not to marry. Argues the idea that there are many reasons why people can not marry, for example, were in the war and prisoners in camps; helped their parents and siblings; are busy with scientific or artistic work for the good of mankind. These renunciations made in a spirit of sacrifice, love for others, are worthy of respect.

But there is another category of people - the monks. They should not be condemned, says Barlea because they "have decided to follow Christ in complete poverty and in perfect cleaning. The monks have existed in both churches, in the Catholic and Orthodox. "Everyone can decide what is best for him, the church supports both marriage and monasticism, but both have "experienced a great devotion, love of God and his fellow."

Final thoughts on the problem of marriage are found in the next issue, on July 9, between modernism and traditionalism. Final thoughts on the problem of marriage, in which, concerned by the socio-political particularities of the time, Monsignor Barlea finds out, dissapointed, that

the Romanian family was affected. The general vision of the idea of family was changed. "Freedom" is misunderstood by the newly married couples who do not want to have many children, being concerned with material realization, sentimental and emotional stability which can gradually lead to a decrease in the number of population.

Some socio-medical measures applied ostentatiously have led to stopping the normal development in the last decades of the Romanian people. His beliefs substrate is generated by the fluctuating mentality of younger generations who tend to reverse the moral values with the material values which would lead to change social behavior of individuals.

Shows broadcasted on Vatican Radio station in Romanian, whose subjects during 1968-1971 were based on social messages reorientation helped shape the Catholic Church towards "people" after a long period of "dogmatic and social seclusion".

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