

**BEING AN AUTHOR UNDER THE ROMANIAN
COMMUNIST REGIME.
THE ACTIVITY OF EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ION BRAD
FOR *THE RED TIE* (1956-1958)**

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ABSTRACT. He witnessed the foundation of the Communist regime in Romania and lived nearly all his life under socialism. The Romanian author Ion Brad is one of those who observed from the inside how the socialist regime propagated its beliefs in the media among the population. For almost 70 years, Ion Brad published hundreds of articles in communist newspapers and magazines such as *The Literary Almanac*, *The Star*, *The Red Tie*, *The Pioneer's Spark*, *The Literary Gazette* and others. The present study is meant to cover the activity of editor-in-chief Ion Brad for the children's magazine *The Red Tie* in a period of time when Communism was just taking up the reins in Romania (1956-1958). Apart from the articles he published, we also wanted to analyse the context in which he had to work (his collaboration with other authors, topics promoted in the magazine etc.). This study could prove very handy for future research in terms of better understanding how Ion Brad rendered the reality in the press of the time and also in observing the context in which writers did their job in a country from Eastern Europe, where Communism had already taken control for 10 years, in the time of a Cold War between two political and ideological systems.

Keywords: Ion Brad, Communism, newspapers, *The Red Tie*, history of press, Romania, Eastern Europe.

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1.1. Ion Brad – short biography

Ion Brad (November 8th 1929 – to present) is a Romanian author, poet and diplomat. He graduated from the Faculty of Philology of Cluj-Napoca (1948-1952) and started working as a journalist while still a student, being a reporter for *The Literary Almanac* (today *The Star*) – one of the first magazines established by the Communists after the end of World War II in Romania. Thus, he can be categorized as a journalist who represented the socialist realism, like most of the authors of the time. Becoming a journalist was just a first step many writers would take to make a living. The Communism brought in Romania plenty of economic issues which the state barely succeeded in sorting out. Consequently, an article published in a Communist magazine could solve the financial problems of a writer in the making. The articles written at the beginnings of the Romanian socialism are the more interesting to study as they show the ideas the regime wanted to spread among the population.

Ion Brad was born in Pănade, Alba County, in a large family consisting of nine children. Growing up, Brad would manage or collaborate with various newspapers and magazines from different positions. After he ended working as a reporter for *The Literary Almanac* (1949-1955), he became editor-in-chief for the children's magazine *The Red Tie* (1956-1958). Later on he would be editor for *The Star* (1958-1960) and then for *The Youth's Spark* (1960-1962), a newspaper which strongly promoted the Communist interests and beliefs.

Ion Brad attended "St. Basil the Great" Highschool in Blaj and in 1948 he became a student of the Faculty of Philology of Cluj. He was still in high school when he made a mark as a writer with the poem *I had a dream about you* (in Romanian language: *Te-am visat*) that he published in 1947 in the magazine *Thought Youthful* of Alba. In the period of time 1962-1965, he was secretary of the Writers' Union of Romania, thus he had so much work to do that he could no longer collaborate as much as before with newspapers and magazines. As of

1962 he became member of the Romanian Workers' Party later renamed the Romanian Communist Party. His political and diplomatic rise climaxed when he was designated ambassador of Romania in Greece for 9 years (1973-1982), later on being in various management positions for various cultural institutions until he retired. After 1989, when the Communism came to an end in Romania, he started to publish his literary and diplomacy memoirs in a lot of memoir volumes.

1.2. Context

In the '50s, the Workers' Party was trying to create the so called "new man". To this purpose, there was an abundance of children's magazines at the beginnings of the Communist regime in Romania, propagating the ideas, values and character that the new generation was supposed to embrace. Such magazines were: *The Pioneer's Spark*, *The Little Light*, *Ploughing Hedgehogs*, *The Children's newspaper*, *The Young Leninist*, *The Pioneer*, *The Pioneers' Instructor*, *Plougher*, *The Brave*, *The Hawks of Homeland*.

The Communists were eager to create role models among the young generation. The Department of Propaganda within the Romanian Communist state created magazines overnight, in such a circulation which today would be impossible to attain. This is what other topic-relevant studies concluded. Statistically, the magazines were directed to specific age groups, so anyone under 18 could easily find articles of interest: "*The Pioneer's Spark* - target group - children in the grades III-VII, weekly publication, an average circulation of 570.000 copies. *The Red Tie* - target group - children in the grades V-VIII, monthly publication, with an average circulation of 34.000 copies. *The Little Light* - target group - readers in the grades I-IV, monthly publication, with an average circulation of 114.000 copies, vividly illustrated, having a message easily accessible to readers, consisting of 20 pages and 21,5x30,5 format, in colours. *Ploughing Hedgehogs* - a

monthly magazine for pre-schoolers, an average circulation of 85.000 copies, being a vividly coloured illustrated album, short explanatory texts, consisting of 16 pages and 17,5x25 format.”²

As long as Ion Brad managed *The Red Tie*, the paper size was A4. In terms of illustrations, the magazine was abundant in photos, drawings, cartoons, caricatures and useful tips. It consisted of 32 pages plus the covers. Here are some of the most frequent topics: “In your spare time”, “Humorous page”, “You try this”, “Poems written by our readers”, “Overseas and far away”, “Questions from readers (for example: how much does the Earth weigh and how old is it?)”, “Caricature shop window”, “Our readers report” etc. The magazine published short stories, poetry, real events, games and useful tips for the little ones. It also contained Romanian translations of Russian poets, translations made by either people of the editorial board or collaborators of the magazine. Among the best-known writers and artists who published articles or graphic images in *The Red Tie* when Ion Brad was editor-in-chief were Nicolae Labiș, Ion Agârbiceanu, Tudor Arghezi, Nina Cassian, Doina Sălăjan, Puiu Manu (illustrator), Cella Delavrancea or Cella Serghi.

Although *The Red Tie* was a magazine whose target audience were children, the Communist propaganda was present with different messages. Either in the shape of Proletkult poems, short stories or illustrations, the Communist ideas were present in every issue. It is worth mentioning that the amount of Communist texts and illustrations differs from issue to issue. The magazine contains a lot of texts which are not at all related to or allusive of the Communist ideas, they are strictly aimed for children. Consequently, those who were in charge created a mix of Communist and unbiased articles. The former editor-in-chief Ion Bradu commented on this: “It was good to publish them as the life of the children was not systematically affected by politics. Children were supposed to play, sing and recite poems.

² Apud <http://www.arhivelenationale.ro/images/custom/file/15%20preda,%20simona.pdf> (accessed on 18.10.2017, time 16:25, in Romanian language).

However, I myself wrote about Lenin after the visit I had made in the winter of 1957 in the Soviet Union, passing through Leningrad, where I saw the places in which he had started the Great Bolshevik Revolution on November 7, 1927 (October Revolution) after he had been hiding in a hut in Razliv³. His superiors, those who ran the Central Committee of the Union of Young Workers (to which I also belonged as an alternate member) welcomed such manifestations.”⁴

Before it became *The Red Tie*, the magazine’s name was *The Glow-Worm* and the people who edited it were partisans of the communist movement. Ion Brad, he himself a nomenclaturist, described the context of those times: “However, as education needed to be implemented in school age children and as the party was evidently focussed on the renewal and «Romanianization» of the top management positions in the press, instead of the pseudonyms mostly used up to that point, I found myself a «nomenclaturist» again, in the capacity of editor-in-chief of the magazine of pioneers, that previously had been managed by a former dressmaker, the wife of comrade Olaru, working for *The Spark*. Her deputy was also a dressmaker – the wife of a comrade whose pseudonym was Bălănescu (a talented psychologist), working for *The Contemporary* magazine, formerly managed by the pseudonym Marcel Breazu before it was handed over to George Ivaşcu from Iaşi county, through the mediation of powerful Mihail Ralea”⁵.

Examining the magazine in the years 1953, 1954 and 1955 – before Ion Brad started to manage the publication – a few conclusions can be drawn. For instance, before Ion Brad became editor-in-chief, that is between 1953-1955, the magazine published much more texts

³ Lenin escaped arrest in 1917, hiding in Razliv village, in the close vicinity of Sankt Petersburg.

⁴ Ion Brad: “I was the first in Romania to write about The Merry Cemetery”. Interview done by Mihai Cistelican in *The Old Fireplace*, X, number 4 (112), April 2018, p. 3 (Romanian language).

⁵ Ilie Rad, *Conversations with Ion Brad: “spring to fall”* (April-October 2013), Eikon Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 132 (Romanian language).

translated from Russian authors, pictures of Lenin in the company of children, articles about visits to Lenin Park or about stamps reflecting Lenin's life. The influence of the Soviets who occupied different positions in the press, as mentioned by Ion Brad, was also obvious in *The Glow-Worm*, the future *Red Tie*.

After Stalin's death, in 1953, *The Red Tie* published a lot of articles about him, later on just a few. When Iosif Stalin died, a special issue came out in the memory of the former communist leader. The articles usually had Proletkult titles, such as: "I. V. Stalin, the brilliant mentor in biology" (*The Glow-Worm*, number VII, published 1953, p. 14). Romanian communists were also promoted. Gheorghiu-Dej's picture was published in the same period of time, which would be highly unusual for the period of time 1956-1958 (when Ion Brad was editor-in-chief) - his name was barely mentioned in the magazine (I. V. Lenin was the main leader promoted in that period of time). Before Ion Brad became editor-in-chief, the magazine contained children articles, however it contained very few illustrations. After 1956, graphics became much trendier in the magazine in the period of time 1956-1958. In the period of time 1953-1955, editors published a lot of articles about the events dedicated to young people, such as World Youth Congress. A trend of the time was to publish a lot in the communist publications about the activities of young people from different communist countries and to provide a lot of information after a certain event had taken place. The font used in the magazine was pretty small, which made the reading uncomfortable. On some of the pages, the text was split into 3 columns, whereas the pictures were quite small.

Colours used should also be mentioned. In the period of time 1953-1955, many illustrations and titles were black and white. This made the magazine unappealing to children. When Ion Brad became editor-in-chief, he introduced comics on the covers and colourful pages. Among the most important authors who collaborated with the magazine (some of them occasionally) in the period of time 1953-1957, we can mention Mihai Sadoveanu, Cezar Petrescu or Nicolae Labiş.

1.3. Validation in the eyes of the population

The Romanian Workers' Party craved validation from the population, so they turned to famous names such as Ion Agârbiceanu or Tudor Arghezi. Its strong desire for validation is best reflected in the case of Tudor Arghezi, who was not a friend of the regime from the beginning. As evidence, the newspaper *The Spark* published in 1948 the serial novel *Poetry of putrefaction or putrefaction of poetry*, by Sorin Toma, in which Tudor Arghezi was basically reduced to zero. Cynically, T. Arghezi would later on become politically engaged and would only write articles or poetry for at least RON 1.000. He signed the article *Last second* (in Romanian language: *Ultima secundă*), when Ion Agârbiceanu died, saying "his pen was crying for a tear"⁶. Mihai Beniuc, former president of the Union of Writers at the time, reported in his memoirs that Arghezi was paid RON 1.000 for that article: "Lucky for him there weren't two tears"⁷, Beniuc ironically commented⁸.

This tendency for relative ideological relaxation and the regime's desire for validation in the eyes of the population is also mentioned in the *Final Report* of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Dictatorship in Romania: "A race has begun (a very long and very difficult one) to acknowledge again writers and books. «The valorisation of the literary inheritance» becomes a theme of the Dejist agitprop, aware now of the stability of the regime they support and also of the necessity to get validation in the eyes of a population deprived of values and who repressed its patriotic instinct

⁶ The last second, by Tudor Arghezi, in *The Literary Gazette*, X, number 22, May 30, 1963, p. 3 (Romanian language).

⁷ Mihai Beniuc, *Under four dictatorships. Memoirs (1940-1975)*, Edition kept by Ion Cristoiu and Mircea Suci. Foreword by Ion Cristoiu, „Ion Cristoiu” Publishing House S.A., Bucharest, 1999, p. 294 (Romanian language).

⁸ Clarifications about the real title of the article can be found: Mihai Beniuc. *Notes of an ordinary man. Diary and memoirs (1965-1969; 1971; 1974)*, Argument by V. Fanache, Preserved edition, foreword, note on edition, notes and comments, name index by Ilie Rad, Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2016, p. 155 (Romanian language).

for too long. By correcting serious errors it itself had made, the party created for itself in time a glorious name, although these «concessions», these relaxation signs were accompanied by the blunt voices from *The Spark*. The latter warned against the danger of the irresponsible extension of «valorisation».”⁹

As from 1957, even in the first issue of the magazine, Ion Agârbiceanu started to publish in *The Red Tie*. He was one of the best-known writers who collaborated with the magazine and also very controversial at the time. At first, the communist regime reduced him to silence as he harshly attacked Communism in his articles, but in time, as years went by, he started to be active again in the field. Apart from Ion Agârbiceanu, other Romanian writers were also banned¹⁰: Lucian Blaga, Mihai Eminescu, Octavian Goga, Ion Antonescu, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, A. C. Cuza, Nichifor Crainic, Radu Gyr, Ion Mihalache and others. Ion Agârbiceanu would publish and get paid by *The Red Tie* as a consequence of his friendship with Ion Brad, lasting since the time Brad was in Cluj-Napoca (1948-1955). The texts Ion Agârbiceanu published in the magazine were non-political and approached themes related to nature, animals and happiness. In the first issue, Agârbiceanu published a short story about a wild cat. Ion Brad together with Mircea Zăciu brought Ion Agârbiceanu back to literary life in 1952, when they organized a conference at the Union of Writers in Romania – Cluj branch, where the great writer was paid homage to and then reaccepted in the Romanian Academy. Brad and Zăciu used this opportunity to praise the author for the novel *Archangels*, a book about the workers from a gold mining area in Romania, and the communist officials really enjoyed the theme. Asked why he thought Ion Agârbiceanu was a good choice to collaborate with the communist magazine *The Red Tie*, Ion Brad mentioned his

⁹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Final report, Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist dictatorship in Romania, 2006, p. 493-494 available under https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/RAPORT%20FINAL_%20CADCR.pdf (Romanian language).

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 488.

literary talent, on the one hand, and his good relationship with Petru Groza (also a communist), on the other hand¹¹. Unfortunately, the former editor-in-chief of *The Red Tie* cannot remember¹² how much Ion Agârbiceanu got paid for his articles. However, I. Radu Boureanu said in a letter from 1958 (comparable timeframe) that he had received from *The Spark* RON 12.000 for the poem *The ballad of executioner Tito*¹³. Ion Agârbiceanu had an even harder time because he was also a Catholic priest and the Greek-Catholic Church had been abolished in 1948¹⁴.

1.4. The most promoted political figures in *The Red Tie*

In 1956, the Soviet troops were still in Romania and the Russians had control through their people over the way in which the cultural press of the time should be. The Soviet troops left Romania as early as 1958. This is an important aspect because, for as long as Ion Brad was editor-in-chief of the magazine (1956-1958), the publication did not publish as much about the Romanian leaders (Petru Groza, Ion Gheorghe Maurer or Gheorghiu-Dej) as it did about the Russian leaders. We decided to examine the fact and see how many articles about these leaders were published in *The Red Tie*. We counted how many times the names of some Russian and Romanian leaders appeared in the period of time 1956-1958 (these years cover the time when Ion Brad was editor-in-chief). There were 36 issues over 3 years. We did not consider the variations of names such as Lenin (example: Leningrad etc.) neither the names of institutions (as they do not

¹¹ Ion Brad: "I was the first in Romania to write about the Merry Cemetery". Interview by Mihai Cistelican in *The Old Fireplace*, X, number 4 (112), April 2018, p. 4 (Romanian language).

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹³ Ilie Rad, Novel letters to Nestor Ignat, in *The Romanian magazine on press history*, year VI, number 1 (11), 2012, p. 188 (Romanian language).

¹⁴ <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/biserica-greco-catolica-prigonita-de-regimul-comunist> (accessed on 16.10.2017, time 17:02, in Romanian language).

directly refer to the person and political figure we examine). We also should mention that we counted the name Vladimir Lenin when he was mentioned under his original family name Ulianov or under Vladimir Ilici.

Based on our study, the name I. V. Lenin appeared 171 times, N. S. Hrușciov¹⁵ 4 times, Nicolai Bulganin¹⁶ 3 times whereas Iosif Stalin, Petru Groza and Gheorghiu-Dej one time each. All the articles in which we find the names of both the Russian and the Romanian leaders are not critical and place the protagonists in a good light. When asked whether he was forced or not to publish such articles, Ion Brad commented as follows in the magazine *The Old Fireplace* from Târgu-Mureș: “Only the general orientation of the party pressured us when Stalin died and Hrușciov took over. Petru Groza was still alive in Romania and he became the leader of the government during the Great National Assembly. In his capacity, he assigned our magazine «the Order of Labour». Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had been considered by Iosif Chișinevschi and Miron Constantinescu for a cult of personality after the death of Hrușciov – Stalin.”¹⁷

1.5. Contradictions

Even though the magazine was under the direct control of the Communists, being edited by the Central Committee of the Union of Young Workers, it also contained illustrations contradicting the ideas that Communists normally believed in. They were atheists (they did not believe in God or other religions). For example, in 1956, in issue 8

¹⁵ N. S. Hrușciov was a Russian politician who headed the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

¹⁶ Nicolai Bulganin was a Russian politician who had different positions in the Soviet Union: Minister for Defence (1953-1955) or prime minister (1955-1958).

¹⁷ Ion Brad: “I was the first in Romania to write about the Merry Cemetery”. Interview by Mihai Cistelican in *The Old Fireplace*, X, number 4 (112), April 2018, p. 3 (romanian language).

from August, they published on the inside cover of the magazine a photo of a monastery or the Sphinx, both symbolic elements full of mysticism and religiousness – quite the opposite of the communist ideology. The two must see places were placed inside the magazine as a competition *Know your country*, urging readers to identify the images. When asked about religious graphics or pictures, Ion Brad said: “We published such photos as an illustration of our country’s beauty, that is why nobody banned them from being published.”¹⁸

Further examining the editorial activity of the magazine under Ion Brad, there were a number of articles or situations raising a question. Even if they were not signed by Ion Brad, they make a huge difference in understanding the whole context in which he published. We focussed on themes such as censorship, the mix of pro-Communism versus non-political articles as well as the editorial coordination. For instance, in 1956 – *The Red Tie*, issue 3, March 1956, page 23 – they published the story of Ella Zeller – *How I became a champion* – with very few thanks and praises to the party and the leader. When asked how such an article could be published in his magazine *The Red Tie* and whether the editorial board was indeed interested in such stories, Ion Brad replied: “Both. At the time, what really counted was the fact that we had been delegated as guests of honour to the International Festival in Warsaw. She was envied because she was a ping pong world champion and she would dress in very expensive elegant outfits which you could not find in Romania.”¹⁹

According to the former editor-in-chief, articles were checked by the official censorship and he also received comments from the Department for children and youth of the Central Committee of the Union of Young Workers. When I asked him if there were specific criteria in place when it came to the selection of articles, Ion Brad argued his superiors did not make special demands: “There were no special criteria. We would write memoirs and poems about our travels through

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

the country and abroad. I was the first one in Romania to write about the so-called «The Merry Cemetery» from Săpânța, in the spring of 1958, after I had visited it with my colleague and friend Ion Horea and with the painter Traian Dăncuș. It was then when I received a story from one of his brothers, a story in which Holy Friday, a «mystical element», was mentioned. This would act against me in the summer of 1958 when they asked me to leave my job from everywhere.”²⁰ As far as banned subjects are concerned, he said „we did not receive such texts”²¹ and the communist censorship did not change articles published in *The Red Tie*: “There were no such cases.”²² Even though the magazine clearly had a communist nuance, it also contained non-political articles. When I asked him if he had to keep a balance between the communism-oriented articles and those that targeted its specific readership, editor-in-chief Ion Brad replied he did not²³.

Among the articles that targeted children or those that were politically oriented, some authors chose to present historical articles (characters, situations etc.). When asked whether the Party set boundaries in terms of the historical events chosen, Ion Brad said loud and clear: no²⁴. Nonetheless, we cannot not suspect there was not a written decision, but one everyone just was aware of. You cannot find in the magazine stories or poems that praise the former king of Romania, Michael I, for example.

2. Articles published by Ion Brad in *The Red Tie*

In the period of time 1956-1958, Ion Brad published in the children’s magazine *The Red Tie* five articles and a great number of poems. He published three commemorative articles (title: *Memories*

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

about our writers: Ion Agârbiceanu in *The Red Tie*, number 9, September 1957, page 1; *The glassmaker from Ilmeanu* in *The Red Tie*, number 1, January 1958, page 31 and *The fruitfulness and beauty of life* in *The Red Tie*, number 3, March 1958, page 1), and two travel articles for professional purposes (*Brief moments in a one-century old city* in *The Red Tie*, number 5, May 1957, page 4 and *Teacher in Maramureș* in *The Red Tie*, number 6, June 1958, page 18). We need to mention that Ion Brad also published Proletkult poems such as *Sun, In May* or *To the beloved leader*. These can be found in the magazine on a frequent basis.

His first commemorative article was dedicated to Ion Agârbiceanu. In issue 9 from September 1957, Ion Brad offered Ion Agârbiceanu a Happy Birthday editorial. The article appeared on the first page under "Memories about our writers". Ion Agârbiceanu turned 75 on September 19, 1957. The evocations, descriptions and Ion Brad's impressions cover a full page and give the writer a positive image. The article does not refer in any way to the political and ideological situation of Ion Agârbiceanu.

Ion Brad starts his article by recollecting when he as a high school student would read the works of Ion Agârbiceanu. He then goes on describing how Ion Agârbiceanu would pick fruit from his yard or dig in his garden. Here is one of the moments Ion Brad reminds of: "It's like yesterday, seeing him a couple of years ago, in a booth at Radio Cluj, reading the sad story of Fefelega. At a given point, we heard him as he stopped reading, he reached for the handkerchief in his pocket and got out. He was tearful. I understood at that point what a strong connection Ion Agârbiceanu and his heroes have"²⁵, Ion Brad said in his article. At the end of his article, he wished Ion Agârbiceanu Happy Birthday and mentioned his literary activity over the past years.

Ion Brad's first 1958 article was published in the January edition. He wrote a reportage about the glassmaker Max Grimm,

²⁵ Ion Brad, Memories about our writers: Ion Agârbiceanu, in *The Red Tie*, number 9, September 1957, p. 1 (Romanian language).

under the title *The glassmaker from Ilmeanu*. Brad describes the glassmaker Max Grimm as „a cautious old man who is as assiduous as a wizard”²⁶. During his visit, Max Grimm was sure to make a demonstration for the editor-in-chief of the magazine *The Red Tie*. The artist created a swimmer holding a ball above her head (the article contains an illustrative picture of the artistic piece). The swimmer that the artist did on the spot was placed among the rest of the objects created by the artist, Ion Brad mentioned in his article. “Fish, butterflies, roses, hounds, elephants, lean deer, a wide range of birds, oak trees, tangled tubes and gorgeous cups. A fairy tale world created by the hands of this man who I really wanted you to meet, those who had not already met him. I also took pictures of some of these wonderful pieces which I had brought home with me. A warm hello, old skilled man, from your new admirers and Romanian friends!”²⁷, Ion Brad ended his article.

In March 1958, Ion Brad published the article *The fruitfulness and beauty of life*. The article was about the sculpture of artist Ion Vlasiu. The sculpture presents a mother holding her two children. Ion Brad comments the artist’s idea and provides his readership with possible explanations. “Those who have read the Memoirs of Ion Vlasiu, *I left my village and went away*, know that the sculptor was the son of peasants and lost his parents when he was very young. This might explain the warm and overwhelming sensation he gave the cold material from which he created the statue. And also, this might also explain why he has also been a great friend of children”²⁸.

Ion Brad carries on his article by presenting a further sculpture created by Ion Vlasiu: *Chopping whip sticks*. The photo shows a child weaving a branch of willow. At the end of the article, Ion Brad urges his readers to read: “That’s how master Ion Vlasiu made his start in

²⁶ Ion Brad, *The glassmaker from Ilmeanu*, in *The Red Tie*, number 1, January 1958, p. 31 (Romanian language).

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

²⁸ Ion Brad, *The fruitfulness and beauty of life*, in *The Red Tie*, number 3, March 1958, p. 1 (Romanian language).

life. For those willing to familiarize themselves with his beginnings, please read his memoirs"²⁹.

His first article inspired by his travels appeared in the 5th number of the magazine, in May 1957. After a visit in Moscow, he named his article *Brief moments in a century-old city*. He begins his article by describing his first impression about Moscow when his plane landed. "The never-ending white accompanied me from Bucharest to Moscow, however, it made me sad not to see the birches, the steppe or the sleighs"³⁰, Ion Brad wrote in the first part of the article. Further on he rendered his impressions about the Vladimir Lenin Museum, which he had visited. "You get to know Vladimir Ilici and to love him a thousand times more following his steps since childhood up to his last days in this museum"³¹.

He then informs his readers on another place he visited: the Kremlin. Ion Brad thoroughly describes what he saw inside the Kremlin (the architecture of the cathedrals, the bell, the buildings etc.). Based on his own words, he was mostly impressed by the boots of emperor Peter the Great. The illustrations used in the article contain three black and white photos of the Kremlin Square, a subway station, Ivan the Great Bell Tower and the Tsar Bell.

In the 6th number from June 1958, Ion Brad published another travel article – Teacher in Maramureş. He wrote the article after he had visited a teacher in Maramureş. Ion Brad gives a written report of how education is like in Săpânța, where a Swiss ran a business and children worked for him instead of going to school. "Beyond the outrageous stories about the adventures of smugglers, which people in charge made a lot of fuss over, life was hard for wood choppers and those who worked on the land and in the factories of Zürcher Otto, a Swiss who came to Săpânța all the way from Switzerland. He couldn't care less that 70% of the children would be illiterate! «His Majesty» indulged in gathering

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

³⁰ Ion Brad, *Brief moments in a century-old city*, in *The Red Tie*, number 5, May 1957, p. 4 (Romanian language).

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

hundreds of children and then have them work for him in the field and in the forest, where he was building a timber factory, for just a couple of pennies. They would also pick the fruit and rose hips for the jam factory, located in the village centre, not far from the school. Poor school!"³². I. Brad continues his article by presenting the school in Săpânța: from how far children came to school, what their desks looked like, the number of teachers etc. He also refers to how villagers understood education after their children grew up, obviously in a communist perspective: "– We'll have him schooled in a wide range of jobs. People from Maramureș love Maramureș and I know they will be back to help to its development!"³³ At the end of the article, Ion Brad said his respectful farewell to the teachers from Săpânța, whereas the teachers promised they would encourage the children to get trained as postmen (a hint to the fact that Ion Brad came along with the "postman of the magazine").

Ion Brad wrote about his visit in Maramureș in 1958: "«Field work», «real life research» were trendy at the time, which, if we really think about the sources and purposes of writing, were pretty good initiatives. In short, on a spring day of 1958, I decided to take a trip in Maramureș, an area still unknown to me"³⁴.

3. Ion Brad left the magazine *The Red Tie*

The political, economic and social context after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 had an impact on Romania as well. When the revolt spread across Hungary, this was a difficult time for Eastern Soviet countries and Romanian officials tried to prove they were loyal to the Russians and started a restructuring process including in press. In the period of time 1956-1958, Romania was still a reliable ally of the Soviet

³² Ion Brad, Teacher in Maramureș, in *The Red Tie*, number 6, June 1958, p. 18 (Romanian language).

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

³⁴ Ilie Rad, Conversations with Ion Brad: "spring to fall" (April-October 2013), Eikon Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 152 (Romanian language).

Union and the nationalist spirit manifested after 1965 was unbelievable: “The Hungarian Revolution and the change of the political context resulted in the revival of dogmatism in the Romanian culture. The Party signalled the continuation of the war against what was left of the exploiters, the intellectuals who worship the Hungarian Revolution, the Western life style and culture”³⁵, indicated the report of the Tismăneanu Commission. Part of the communists and partisans of the Party were fired from the leadership positions they were having.

Restructuring, the removal of those who failed to fight for or failed to show their absolute loyalty to the Romanian Communist Party, was not the only way to go. Many intellectuals were also arrested: Vasile Voiculescu, Aurel Martin, Valeriu Anania, Constantin Noica and others³⁶. The intellectuals in Romania would hear word that the situation was still unpredictable: “A new wave of arrests and political lawsuits spread fear among the Romanian intellectuals who would learn that political terror was specific to the regime and did not go away when Stalin faded from history”³⁷.

Ion Brad, editor-in-chief of the children’s magazine *The Red Tie*, found himself caught in the same complicated historical context. In 1958 an assembly analysed the press environment. The assembly was headed by the former Romanian leader Nicolae Ceaușescu who was secretary of the Central Committee at the time. Ion Brad was fired. In the 9th number of September 1958, Ion Brad’s name was no longer to be found under the editorial team as editor-in-chief.

³⁵ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Final report, Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, 2006, p. 497 available under https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/RAPORT%20FINAL_%20CADCR.pdf (Romanian language)

³⁶ http://www.romlit.ro/scriitori_arestai_1944-1964 (accessed on 16.10.2017, time 13:10, in Romanian language).

³⁷ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Final report, Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, 2006, p. 497 available under https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/RAPORT%20FINAL_%20CADCR.pdf (Romanian language)

Ion Brad was blamed for allowing religious and anti-regime articles to be published in the magazine. They were referring to an article written by Doina Sălăjan (The Romanian Workers' Party labelled as „mean” the reaction of the poetess who said that the Soviet troops should not have gone to Budapest) and other religious articles. Doina Sălăjan worked for the magazine *The Red Tie* from Bucharest until 1958, when she was accused of „revisionism” and „meanness towards the regime” and she was labelled as „an enemy of the class”. One of the “evidence” the Communists presented was the poem *Forgetfulness* (in Romanian language: *Uitarea*) published in *The Literary Gazette*³⁸ of 1956.

As it appears in the *Final Report* of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, this is how Ion Brad was asked to leave the magazine: “Ion Brad, an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Union of Young Workers, was sanctioned as guilty and fired from the position of editor-in-chief of the magazine *The Red Tie*, because he failed to draw attention to the «mean outbursts» of poetess Doina Sălăjan during the Hungarian Revolution (she said the Soviet tanks should not be on the streets of Budapest) and because he allowed religious articles to be published”³⁹. The stand of the representatives of the Romanian state at the time is obvious and comes out in the report: „In her poem *Forgetfulness* [...], Doina Sălăjan openly attacked the Party, claiming that the Party had forgotten the suffering of «the people» and that the Party’s policy would fail to represent the interests of the people”⁴⁰.

As for the religious articles, Ion Brad claimed they were referring to an article written by Ion Agârbiceanu (a poem about bees,

³⁸ Doina Sănăjan, *Forgetfulness*, in *The Literary Gazette*, III, number 41, 11 October 1956, p. 3 (Romanian language).

³⁹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Final report, Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Dictatorship in Romania*, 2006, p. 151 available under https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/RAPORT%20FINAL_%20CADCR.pdf (Romanian language).

⁴⁰ ANIC, stock CC of RCP -Office, file 88/1962, unprocessed file (Romanian language).

which Ion Agârbiceanu considered „God’s flies”) and a fairy tale written after a visit at the Merry Cemetery in Săpânța. As far as Agârbiceanu is concerned, the article was *Blossoming acacias* in *The Red Tie*, number 7, July 1958: „Golden/ Bees;/ Fast/ And giving,/ After honey/ Off they fly/ As if they were/ God’s flies.../ Who knows what they say/ That’s me!”, Ion Agârbiceanu wrote⁴¹. Although the report of the Tismăneanu Commission and Ion Brad say nothing clearly about another religion-related article, we think we should mention it. In 1956, in the 8th number, the image of a monastery appeared on the inside cover, along with other touristic attractions from Romania. Readers were asked to identify those places. Romania is full of touristic attractions and we cannot ignore the fact that they chose to publish a religious attraction in a communist magazine that targeted children. The editors could have easily chosen a different objective for the children to identify but they did not.

The fairy tale which caused problems to Ion Brad contains stories with fantastic elements: fairies, a magic whip, the Bad Mother of the Forest, fantastic creatures etc. The fairy tale was written after a visit of the magazine’s representatives in Săpânța, in Maramureș. The fragment from the fairy tale *The magic whip* was published in several issues of the magazine *The Red Tie*, as a serial story, starting February 1958; it was told by a shepard from Săpânța: “It was on a lovely Sunday when Stan Pătru and the fairy went for a dance with all the other fairies and the Princes Charming up on the meadows of Arșița. The Bad Mother of the Forest started a storm out of the blue. The storm knocked down the houses and the outbuildings (my note, M. C.: buildings around one’s house), the Bad Mother of the Forest grabbed her whip and maliciously smiled to herself that she could finally take revenge on Stan Pătru, who refused to be her husband” – is one of the fragments in the fairy tale⁴². This is why the Communists accused Ion Brad of having promoted religious and

⁴¹ Ion Agârbiceanu, *Blossoming acacia*, in *The Red Tie*, number 7, July 1958, p. 3 (Romanian language).

⁴² Titus Bîlțiu-Dăncuș, *The man of forests: Stan Pătru*, in *The Red Tie*, number 4, April 1958, p. 26 (Romanian language).

mystical themes in the magazine. Another article which promotes religious ideas is an article from 1956. The text describes how a little girl's grandpa died. One of the characters in the short story is a landowner who goes hunting during a very snowy winter – the writer Tamara Pânzaru described. Grandpa used to tell bedtime stories to his grandchildren and one of them was about Holy Friday⁴³.

Another possible reason for firing Ion Brad could be “embezzlement of funds”, according to Mihai Beniuc, the former president of the Union of Writers of Romania at the time (in his memoirs). Ion Brad replied these were lies “told because at the general conference of the writers from the year 1965, I had to publicly part my ways with him, [...]”⁴⁴ because he was acting as “the instrument of the Soviets for us.”⁴⁵

4. Conclusions

The author Ion Brad is a figure worth to be examined due to the articles he published during the Communism and his present testimonials. He was an inside observer of how the Communist regime in Romania propagated its beliefs and ideology.

Based on his activity as editor-in-chief for the magazine *The Red Tie*, we conclude the following. His articles, though not many, present political aspects in 50% of the cases. He was able to write articles which had nothing to do with the ideology of the time. On the other hand, he would compensate by writing Proletkult poems or articles that would denounce very rich people. A further controversial and contradictory aspect was his attitude towards the Communist regime taking into

⁴³ Tamara Pânzaru, A little joy, in *The Red Tie*, number 5, May 1956, p. 15 (Romanian language).

⁴⁴ Ion Brad: “I was the first in Romania to write about the Merry Cemetery”. Interview by Mihai Cistelican in *The Old Fireplace*, X, number 4 (112), April 2018, p. 4 (Romanian language).

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

account that he allowed to be published in the magazine while he was editor-in-chief banned authors and religious images and texts at the beginning of the Communist dictatorship.

Based on this study about the magazine *The Red Tie* and the type of journalism Ion Brad promoted at the time and also considering the historical and social context of the time, future studies can be performed. An example could be the evolution of language towards “the enemy of class” in the press of the time, so often invoked by the Communist leaders.

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