

The Rockefeller Foundation in Romania: For A Crossed History of Social Reform and Science

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During my archival research at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) I studied over 100 folders related to the actions of the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) in Romania during the interwar period. Some of these folders were from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archive, but most documented the work of the RF in Romania and its European Office in Paris.

First, I will describe the projects developed in Romania with financial and technical assistance from the RF. Then, I will discuss the conditions in which a system of relationships was built between the Rockefeller Foundation and Romanian institutions and scholars.

1. Overview on the RF projects developed in Romania

a) Funds allocated between the two world wars

Allocations for definite projects in Romania between the two world wars

<i>Field</i>	<i>Time interval</i>	<i>Total fund allocated</i>
Public Health	1931-1940	\$146,420
Nursing	1929-1940	\$107,500
Social Sciences	1932-1940	\$ 52,200
Demographics	1930-1940	\$ 31, 855
Medical Sciences	1923-1931	\$ 15, 275.21
Epidemics	1931-1940	\$ 98,600
Natural Sciences	1930	\$ 3,281
<i>All fields</i>	<i>1923-1940</i>	<i>\$455,131.21</i>

Between 1923 and 1940, the RF allocated approximately \$ 455,131.21 for projects in relation to Romanian institutions. The most important of these funds went to public health projects: \$146,200 was allocated for such developments under the International Health Division from 1931 to 1940. The first recipients were the Institute of Hygiene in Cluj, for which a grant of \$6,110 was given in 1931 to enlarge the building and equip training and research laboratories, and the Local Health Department of Gilau in the Cluj area, which received \$15,310 between 1931 and 1936 for public health demonstrations and practice fields¹. The Institute of Hygiene in Bucharest was allocated the largest part of these funds, \$110,000, for the period 1934-1940 towards building and equipment. In November 1939, when these funds were cut off because of the war, the building was almost completed. In connection with this Institute, a rural Health Center in the area of Bucharest also received assistance with \$15,000 in demonstrations and practice fields for health officers and nurses².

The projects for nursing ranked second to public health programs, with allocations of \$107,500 between 1929 and 1940. The Nursing School in Cluj received \$10,000 from 1929 to 1933 to improve its facilities through modern installations and equipment for training services and through development of teaching staff.³ Here again, the most important funds went to Bucharest, where 'Regina Maria' School for Nursing received \$85,000 for building and equipment from 1935 to 1941, and \$12,000 to supplement salaries of teaching staff and assist the organization of practice fields from 1936 to 1941 and finally \$500.00 to purchase teaching material in 1937.⁴ In autumn 1940, the payments here were suspended too.

Under its program for social sciences, the RF allocated \$52,200 to Romanian institutions between 1932 and 1940. The most important recipient was the Institute of Social Science of Bucharest, directed by sociologist Dimitrie Gusti. For its general budget, this institute received two grants: \$22,500 from 1932 through 1934, as part of the program for 'General Support of University Research in the Social Sciences', and also \$9,000 for 'Termination of General Support of University Research in the Social Sciences' from 1936 through 1937.

¹ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 1, Folder 1 – Cluj Institute of Hygiene, 1931-1933; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. J – Romania. Public Health Demonstrations, Box 3, Folder 29 – Gilau (Local Health Department), 1928-1929; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. J – Romania. Public Health Demonstrations, Box 3, Folder 30 – Gilau (Local Health Department), 1930-1938, 1940

² RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 1, Folder 5 – Institute of Hygiene, Bucharest, 1926-1929, 1932-1933; RF, RG 6.1 – Field Offices. Paris, Series 1.1 – Prewar Correspondence, Box 33, Folder 404 – Bucharest Health Center, 1939

³ RF, RG 1.1, Series 783. C, Box 3, Folder 21 – Cluj School of Nursing, 1926-1936, 1940

⁴ RF, RG 1.1, Series 783. C, Box 3, Folder 19 – Bucharest School of Nursing, 1926-1927, 1933, 1935-1941; RF, RG 6.1 – Field Offices. Paris, Series 1.1 – Prewar Correspondence, Box 33, Folder 406 – IHD Romania – Bucharest School Of Nursing, 1937; RF, RG 6.1 – Field Offices. Paris, Series 1.1 – Prewar Correspondence, Box 33, Folder 407 – IHD. Bucharest School of Nursing, 1938-1939

In connection with the program of studies in 'Peaceful Change' on the Agenda of the International Studies Conference, the Romanian Institute of Social Science was given a Special Grant-in-Aid of \$1,200 as stipends for four assistants designed to study the Danubian problems for the years 1936 and 1937. This Institute received allocations in several sequences: \$2,500, 1936 and 1937, \$6,000 in 1938 and \$4,000 in 1940, for the organization and the general budget of a Department of International Relations and Foreign Policies focusing mainly on Balkan problems.⁵

The social sciences program at the Institute of Psychology in Cluj also benefited from the RF. In 1935 through 1936, it received \$2,000 towards salaries and statistical equipment under the 'Romanian Personalities' project.⁶

Close to both public health and social science programs, the demographic field appears to link the two. I chose to treat it separately here because the total funds allocated for demographic projects in Romania between 1930 and 1940 was \$31,855, which supported the work of the same person, Dr. Sabin Manuila. The Vital Statistic Bureau in Bucharest received \$29,255 to assist in the reorganization of its demographic service with personnel and equipment for the period 1930 through 1935. In connection with the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, Dr. Manuila, as an expert member of the Danubian group, received these grants: \$800 from 1937 through 1938, \$1,300 in 1939 and \$500 in 1940, to study population movement in the southeastern European countries.⁷

Although the medical sciences were the starting point for RF projects in Romania, no complex developments as those presented above were put into practice. Between 1923 and 1931, \$15,275.21 was allocated to Romanian medical science institutions. In 1923, Romania was put on the list of the 'Emergency Aid Program in Medical Education', and the medical faculties of Bucharest, Cluj and Jassy received \$5,000 for their various needs.⁸ Other funds were allocated for equipment for teaching and research laboratories, the recipients being the

⁵ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783.S – Romania. Social Sciences, Box 4, Folder 33 – Romanian Institute of Social Sciences, 1929-1931; RF, GR 1.1 – Projects, Series 183.S – Romania. Social Sciences, Box 4, Folder 34 – Romanian Institute of Social Science Bucharest, 1932-1935; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 S. Romania. Social Sciences, Folder 35 –Romanian Social Institute, 1936-2937; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783.S – Romania. Social Sciences, Box 4, Folder 36 – Romanian Institute of Social Sciences, Bucharest, 1938-1941; RF, GR 1.1 – Projects, Series 783.S – Romania, Box 4, Folder 37 – Romanian Institute of Social Science, Bucharest, 1944-1954, 1947

⁶ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. S – Romania. Social Sciences, Box 4, Folder 38 – University of Cluj. Psychology (Margineanu, Nicolas), 1935-1938

⁷ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Sub series K – Health Services, Box 4, Folder 31 – Vital Statistics (Bureau of), 1928-1937; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 S. Romania. Social Sciences, Folder 35 – Romanian Social Institute, 1936-2937; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783.S – Romania. Social Sciences, Box 4, Folder 36 – Romanian Institute of Social Sciences, Bucharest, 1938-1941

⁸ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. A – Romania. Medical Sciences, Box 2, Folder 15 – Emergency Aid, 1920-1927

Institute of Serology of the University of Bucharest, for \$7,275.21 in 1925 and the Institute of Experimental Medicine in Bucharest for \$3,000 in 1931.⁹

An important chapter in the Romanian activity of the RF concerns the research in epidemics. Two series of studies were undertaken in Romania under a 'Research Project on the Control and Investigations of Specific Diseases', which represent together a total of \$98,600.

The first campaign, started in 1931 and conducted by Romanians, established the Station for Malaria Studies at the 'Socola' Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases in Jassy. The project received \$7,800 and apparently ended in 1936.¹⁰

The second campaign was a project for a comparative study between American and European Scarlet Fever. The field of observation for Europe was chosen in Romania, near Jassy, because of the multiple types of the disease registered in the area. The work was first directed by the American Dr. Gordon between the years 1935 and 1939 and then by the English Dr. Jeanny between 1939 and 1940, the former operating with Romanian technical staff. The allocations were of \$20,000 under Dr. Gordon and of \$21,000 under Dr. Jeanny. This last allocation was cut in 1940 with the interruption of the studies. The equipment, valued at \$3,939.60, was offered as gift to the Romanian State.¹¹

Finally on our list come the projects classified under Natural Sciences and Agriculture section. Grants totaling \$3,281 were allocated twice in 1931 to the Institute of General Physiology of the University of Bucharest. These funds were for equipment necessary for the research work of former fellows: \$550 for E. Chirnoaga and \$2,731 for N. Gavrilescu.¹²

Research in various sciences was very important in the philosophy of the RF. But, for Romania, investment in scientific research was not considered a priority. Even if credible scientists were offered grants to study in laboratories of Great Britain and United States, upon their return to Romania their work risked being lost for lack of support. The RF believed that their work could be saved from such isolation, and helped them systematically to maintain contact with Western laboratories.

⁹ RF, RG 6.1 – Field Offices. Paris, Series 1.1 – Prewar Correspondence, Box 6, Folder 73 – MS Romania, 1923-1937; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. A – Romania. Medical Sciences, Box 2, Folder 13 – Cantacuzino Institute, Bucharest (Boivin Andre, Equipment), 1930-1932

¹⁰ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. I – Romania. Malaria, Box 3, Folder 26 – Nervous and Mental Diseases Hospital, "Socola", Jassy. Malaria Station, 1931-1933, 1936

¹¹ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 2, Folder 9 – Scarlet Fever, 1932-1934

¹² RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. D – Romania Natural Sciences and Agriculture, Box 3, Folder 23 – Chirnoaga Eugen (Equipment), 1930; RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. D – Romania. Natural Sciences, Box 3, Folder 24 – University of Bucharest. Physiology (Gavrilescu N., Equipment), 1931, 1936-1937, 1940

b) Other grants destined to Romania

The following table describes other RF financial support for Romanian institutions. Since there is no connection between them and any of the projects listed above, I classify them together and interpret them as isolated special programs evocative of critical political contexts.

Funds for isolated programs in Romania

<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Time interval</i>	<i>Fund</i>	<i>Program</i>
Young Men Christian Association and International Red Cross in Romania	1917	Rubles \$30, 000	'War Relief Program': war refugees
Dimitrie Gusti	1946-1947	\$ 500	Visit US Universities – Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Wisconsin; lecture tour
Academy of Romanian People's Republic, Linguistics Department	1959	\$ 3,200	Purchase of spectrograph for speech analysis

As part of its 'War Relief' program in Europe, the RF supported the neutral Red Cross and the Young Men's Christian Association. Romania received 30,000 rubles and Poland 20,000 rubles for war refugees in 1917.¹³

The second case refers to a trip made by sociologist D. Gusti to the United States in January through February of 1947, which is not to be regarded as a regular travel grant. While it seems in some ways a continuation of the social science program developed in Romania before 1940, it is an isolated and special case because the diplomatic circumstances prevented the RF from any action in Romania. The trip was made possible by the fact that Gusti was already in the United States when he requested support. As president of the Romanian Academy, he was sent on a mission abroad to reestablish intellectual relations with French and American institutions working in the social sciences as well as to meet delegates to the United Nations General Assembly in New York in the autumn of 1946. He was supposed to return to Romania in November 1946, but he obtained permission to stay until the beginning of 1947. The RF had awarded him a grant under the 'Refugee Scholar Program' in 1941, offering him \$5,000 and a position in the New School for Social Research in New York, but he was not able to take advantage of this award and the grant lapsed. By virtue of the services he had rendered to the RF in Balkan matters and as fellowship advisor, as well as for the fame he enjoyed among sociologists in the interwar period, Gusti was

¹³ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 100 – International, Subseries N – War Relief, Box 74, Folder 710 – Romania, 1916-1918

offered a lecture tour at four American universities: Harvard, Yale, Chicago and Wisconsin.¹⁴ This can be characterized as an act of courtesy on account of his long record of cooperation in the past and a symbolic closing of this cooperation.

The third action in this quite discontinuous series consists of the purchase of an apparatus for the study of phonetics at the Linguistic Department of the Romanian People's Academy in 1959. It no doubt reflects the improvement of the conditions for international relationships in Romania, commercial exchange with the Western countries being authorized in 1958. Anyway, there is no trace of direct Romanian correspondents. The recommendation for this grant was made on behalf of a group of philologists under the leadership of Prof. A. Rosetti from the Romanian Academy (Prof. A. Avram, B. Cazacu, G. Ivanescu, E. Vasiliu, Dr. G. Mihaila, Dr. Copceag), with strong intervention from Roman Jakobson of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University.¹⁵

2. Building a system of relationships

The actions of the RF in Romania were constantly influenced by a variety of factors: International and European congresses for social reconstruction after the Great War, the activity of humanitarian associations in Romania, the ties of Romanian scholars with institutions and individuals in Europe and the United States, the political context and the social politics of the successive governments in Romania, its situation in Eastern Europe, the diplomatic relations between Romania and the United States, and the protocol of project development within the RF.

a) Terms of Negotiation

The decade of 1920 to 1930 can be considered a period of explorations, with the gradual evolution from mutual ignorance and reserve to complex negotiations, which produced relatively limited practical results but established a sufficient basis for future cooperation.

The interest of the RF in Romania was awakened at the beginning of the 1920s by appeals from medical professors (V. Babes, I. Cantacuzene) and women active in nursing (Ethel Pantazzi, the Queen of Romania). Through international congresses and the Red Cross in Romania they learned that the RF was planning to help redress public health conditions in Europe. In fact, the RF proceeded carefully with the advance of its intervention in different

¹⁴ FR, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783.S – Romania. Social Sciences, Box 4, Folder 32 – D. Gusti (Visit, Social Sciences), 1946-1947

¹⁵ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 1, Folder 1 – Academy of the Romanian People's Republic, Linguistics, 1958-1962

European countries. No definite plans were put forward, and the RF was guided by the principle of doing by seeing.

According to this principle, the decision to intervene in Romania was delayed until information was gathered on the situation in the fields for which help was required as well as on the conditions of a successful assistance. The first reports, based on first-hand surveys, were done in 1923 on medical education¹⁶ and nursing¹⁷ conditions. Following these reports, the officers of the RF decided that the situation required urgent intervention, and soon the idea was developed that Romania could serve as a 'sanitary belt' against diseases coming from Russia and Asia.

However, until 1929-1930 the political situation in Romania was considered unfavorable for large projects. Indeed, the territorial enlargement of Romania in 1918 made it necessary to unify the administrative-legislative system, which was not without nationalist ideological side effects. This, and the warnings coming from RF advisors in Romania – scholars and fellows sharing reformist views – against corruption and favoritism within the ministries and the academic system justified the reservations of the RF. Intervention was postponed until better times.

Therefore, by the end of the 1920s, no complex projects had started in Romania. Nevertheless, the number of recipients of travel grants kept increasing and these people become more and more enthusiastic about what could be done in Romania with the support of the RF. They persuaded the RF officers that they had found an ally in the newly-organized National Peasant Party (1926) of Iuliu Maniu. As a matter of fact, when the National Peasant Party first acceded to the government in 1929, various projects had already been negotiated and the RF gave approval for action to be taken in Romania. The diplomatic figures who enabled the formalities between the RF and Romanian government were scholars not directly involved in politics but who held key positions under several Maniu administrations in the 1930s: statistician S. Manuila, sociologist D. Gusti, Dr. I. Moldovan, in the public health field in Cluj and Dr. G. Mezincescu, in public health in Bucharest.

If the decade 1930-1940 appears to be one of intense cooperation both in public health and in the social sciences, a distance in time between the negotiations of their respective projects can be observed. This distance in time is particularly evocative of the evolution in the humanitarian politics of the RF and its reflection on Romania. Actually,

¹⁶ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. A – Romania. Medical Sciences, Box 3, Folder 16 – Eversole, Henry O., "Medical Education in Romania. Emergency Aid Program. Report", 1923

¹⁷ RF, RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783. C – Romania. Nursing, Box 3, Folder 22 – CRO-1 Crowell, F. Elisabeth, 'Memorandum Re Study of Sick Nursing and Health Visiting in Romania', 1923

towards the middle of the 1930s, the RF became concerned with international intellectual cooperation as a means of dealing with conflict and as an instrument of peace keeping. From this point of view, Romania was seen as a possible center of debates on Balkan and South-Eastern European problems. This opinion developed among a group of sociologists from the Romanian Institute of Social Sciences, where an International Documentation Section and a Danubian Studies Department had been created under the influence of the International Cooperation Institute and with the assistance of its former secretary, Chalmers Wright.

This routine cooperation was interrupted in 1940, and it would not be reestablished after the war. The RF constantly gathered information on the situation in Romania during 1944-1948 from former fellow-workers¹⁸ who sent notes about the consequences of the war on the former RF grant recipients. Information came mostly through the Allied Control Commission for Romania, but also on the occasion of D. Gusti's visit to the United States in 1946-1947. Both sides expected the situation to return to normal somehow, but by the end of 1947, it was obvious that nothing was to be done any more. The public process of Liberal and Peasant parties in 1947-1948 by the new regime in Bucharest left the former American-oriented intellectuals with no possibility of escape. Some of them were sent to prison; others like Gusti were removed from their posts and put under strict surveillance, but only a few could escape the country. Those former fellows who reached the United States, as did Manuila, contacted the RF, and we can see from some fellowship recorder cards and the postwar correspondence¹⁹ how they managed within American social and professional life. For example, Manuila worked with the Census Bureau in Washington and his wife was attached to the International Institute of Social Work in New York in relation to Romanian immigration. Others repeatedly denounced the Communist regime by writing in American journals and reviews in connection with the National Committee for a Free Europe.

b) The fellows and the reception of the American culture in Romania

According to the RF fellowship cards, 113 Romanians were offered travel grants during the interwar interval, some of them several times. There were 68 fellowships with the International Health Board, out of which 18 were for nursing, 30 with Humanities and Social

¹⁸ RF. RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 2, Folder 7 – Institute of Hygiene (Bucharest), 1944-1947; RF. RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 1, Folder 2 – Institute of Hygiene (Cluj), 1945-1948; RF. RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 3, Folder 20 – Bucharest School of Nursing, 1946; RF. RG 1.1 – Projects, Series 783 – Romania, Box 4, Folder 37 – Romanian Institute of Social Sciences (Bucharest), 1944-1945, 1947; RF, RG 2 – General Correspondence, Box 311, Folder 2107. Romania, 1945

¹⁹ RF. RG 2 – General Correspondence, Box 391, Folder 2439 – Romania, 1947; RF. RG 2 – General Correspondence, Box 430, Folder 2897 – Romania, 1948; RF. RG 2 – General Correspondence, Box 505, Folder 3378 – Romania, 1950; RF. RG 2 – General Correspondence, Box 547, Folder 3651 – Romania, 1951; RF. RG 2 – General Correspondence, Box 48, Folder 303 – Romania, 1952

Sciences Division, 11 with the International Education Board and 4 with the International Health Division, whose travels were suspended when the war started in 1940.

Grants offered by the RF to Romanians between the two world wars

<i>Department</i>	<i>Total number of recipients</i>
International Health Board	68
Humanities and Social Sciences	30
International Education Board	11
International Health Division	4

These fellowship cards, together with other Romanian sources, become particularly important for the study of the cultural transfers from the United States to Romania in relation to the modernization process during the interwar period. I would limit my analysis of this question here to a few remarks concerning the influence of the actions developed by the RF in Romania on the creation of a community of intellectuals sharing an American orientation related to applied sciences.

Institutionalized forms of this community developed around a nucleus of former fellows. In January 1934, an American Institute was founded in Bucharest, and its bulletin²⁰, issued four times a year from 1934 to 1938, was destined to keep the Romanian public informed about new developments in American social, cultural and scientific life, as well as with the philanthropic activities of the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations. Moreover, the fellows organized themselves into the association of ‘Former Fellows of the Rockefeller Foundation’, 1936, which became the ‘Society Friends of the United States’ under D. Gusti’s presidency. In 1946 it published an official bulletin, and it is also mentioned in the RF correspondence of 1945 through 1946²¹.

But, through the RF’s fellowship program, the American model inspired the creation, in 1929, of a School for Social Work in Bucharest. It was presided over by D. Gusti and directed by S. Manuila’s wife, Veturia²², and by another member of Gusti’s Institute, sociologist Xenia Cost-Foru. The teaching staff was recruited from the Romanian Institute of Social Sciences and the Central Institute for Statistics, and the graduates, women from Romanian urban bourgeoisie, were employed by the Direction of Social Assistance in the Ministry of Work, Health and Social Assistance.

²⁰ *Buletinul Institutului American din Romania* (‘Bulletin of the American Institute in Romania’) was presided by Mihail Oromolu

²¹ RF, GR 1.1 – Projects, Series 783.S – Romania, Box 4, Folder 37 – Romanian Institute of Social Science, Bucharest, 1944-1954, 1947

²² Veturia Manuila had studied social work at John Hopkins University in 1924-1926. In the same period, her husband was in the US on a travel grant from the RF for demographic studies. At the RAC there is no reference that V. Manuila had benefited of financial assistance from RF to complete her studies in social work.

If this school reflects the transfer from the United States of theoretical notions and technical methods of dealing with family troubles and social dependence²³, it also helps us to understand the Romanian solution to women's emancipation at the time. It seems that, indeed, this manner of inviting educated women to act in the public life by taking charge of the wounded side of the society through *caring*²⁴, took over other revolutionary models. Romanian women did not gain the right to vote until 1946, but many of those considered politically and culturally influential enjoyed public visibility before this date and were associated with the domain of social assistance.

3. Conclusion

At the end of the Great War the necessity to rebuild social life on modern basis in Europe became a common reference, and if it did not stand above the various national attitudes carrying conflicting political interpretations and goals, it generated an intellectual cosmopolitan milieu through debate circles and shared projects. It is from this perspective that the role of the Rockefeller Foundation can be sociologically designated, as an agent promoting a specific model of science-based reform.

As can be observed from the Romanian case outlined above, the RF served progressively to create a system of relationships based on cooperation and exchange and representing a link between the scientific communities from the United States to Europe, and from Western to Eastern Europe. From this point of view, its role as a vehicle for cultural transfers through science should be outlined.

The archives of the RF represent an important resource for the analysis of the modernizing process on a transnational scale. I therefore plead for an alternative perspective to the nation-building pattern of interpreting the modernization process by taking into account its cosmopolitan side. Moreover, I defend a performative interpretation of modernization, in which shared models and various accomplishments should be constantly put in relation to one another.

²³ See *Buletinul Scolii de Asistenta Sociala 'Printesa Ileana'* ('The Bulletin of the School for Social Work 'Princess Ileana') issued regularly between 1929-1944; *L'Assistance sociale en Roumanie*, Bucarest 1938

²⁴ Patricia Paperman, Sandra Laugier, *Le Souci des autres. Ethique et politique du "care"*, Paris, Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales – coll. "Raisons Pratiques", 2005