

FOLK LITERATURE RECORDED FROM ROMANIANS IN PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMPS IN GERMANY BETWEEN 1916-1918

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Abstract Founded in 1909 by W. Doegen in Berlin, the *Sound Archive (Lautarchiv)* was enriched during the First World War with valuable texts and folk songs recorded on discs and wax cylinders or recorded on paper. The research took place in 32 of the 175 prisoner-of-war camps of the Allied Powers, which covered the territory of Germany at that time. The prisoners came from European, Asian, African countries and the United States of America, and the research was carried out by a team of 50 German specialists in the languages spoken in those countries. Among them are three camps with prisoners from the Kingdom of Romania and from Bessarabia located in the perimeter of the cities of Chemnitz, Mannheim and Lamsdorf. The study presents some of the results obtained by the professors M. Friedwagner and H. Urtel in the research of the Romanian prisoners in those camps.

Keywords First World War, prisoners, Sound Archive, W. Doegen, H. Urtel.

Folk literature in the Berlin *Lautarchiv*

Who would have thought that, during the Great War (1914-1918), in the prisoner-of-war camps in Germany, research was being conducted on enemy languages and oral culture? However, this did indeed take place, and the materials thus recorded are kept in the *Sound Archive (Lautarchiv)* of the Humboldt University of Berlin. The research endeavour did not lead to an improvement of the prisoners' situations,¹ but it did become a remarkable moment in the history of the humanities.

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¹ The prisoners' testimonies, certain documents and studies dedicated to World War I prisoner-of-war camps, as well as the cemeteries, reveal an endless series of hardships faced by those who had been fortunate enough to not lose their lives on the front, but who ultimately fell into the hands of the enemy.

The initiative belonged to a Berlin-based English professor named Wilhelm Doegen, who, in 1905, founded a museum of peoples' voices (*Stimmen-Museum der Völker*). In 1909, he began producing disks that were meant to be used in the individual learning of foreign languages. His ambition was to preserve samples of all languages on Earth on disks. The First World War had given him an unforeseen opportunity – Germany was suddenly packed with 175 camps for the prisoners of war captured from the Allied Forces (The Entente), speakers of many languages from Europe, Asia, Africa and North America.

After pulling certain strings with the German Ministry of War, Doegen obtained approval to conduct certain research in the fields of philology, oral culture and folk music in 32 prisoner-of-war camps located in his country. Therefore, the initial project of a sound archive that holds records of living languages gained in monumentality and introduced a completely new scholarly concept, namely that of *war ethnology*. By obtaining funding from Emperor Wilhelm II's personal funds, Doegen assembled a team of 50 specialists in the languages of the prisoners (over 250 idioms). From December 1915 to December 1918, they collected cultural information – they did not gather political information, or information pertaining to the war, but strictly information on language and oral culture – from prisoners. After the war ended, the cataloguing and proper archiving of the recordings followed, with the project being declared completed only in the year 1930.

The prisoner-of-war camps in the Romance countries were subjected to research conducted by the renowned professors Heinrich Morf (from the University of Freiburg), Matthias Friedwagner (from the universities in Frankfurt am Main and in Chernivtsi)² and Hermann Urtel (from the University of Hamburg). The latter two, whose names often appear in connection with H. Tiktin's name and writings,³ carried out their research endeavours in four camps that held Romanian speakers, as follows: on 18 June 1916, in the camp in Chernivtsi; on 2 November 1916, in the camp in Mannheim; on 23 November 1916, in Königsbrück, and between 9 and 11 August 1917, in Lamsdorf (today: Lambinowice/Poland). The subjects thus scrutinised were, in Chemnitz, Bessarabian Romanians, in Königsbrück, one Romanian from

First and foremost, diseases and hunger, not to mention the longing for loved ones, caused the deaths of a large number of Romanian prisoners on foreign soil.

² At that time, he was known as the author of several studies dedicated to M. Sadoveanu and to the folk poetry of the Romanian people from Bukovina.

³ This information is absent from the works that have approached H. Tiktin until now: I. Rizescu: *H. Tiktin. Viața și opera* [H. Tiktin. Life and work] (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1971), or the collective volume: *Locul lui H. Tiktin, membru de onoare al Academiei Române, în lingvistica românească* [H. Tiktin's Contributions to Romanian Linguistics as an Honorary Member of the Romanian Academy] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2006). Rizescu shows that in August 1916, the Romanian state ceased all subsidies for the Romanian Language Seminar at the University of Berlin. Consequently, Tiktin, who was a professor at that university, was forced to seek means of subsistence elsewhere; it is assumed that the *Lautarchiv* project came to his aid. In his report on the project's achievements, H. Urtel highly praises the contribution of the Romanian translator, without naming him directly, but I have no doubt that this was indeed H. Tiktin.

Bosnia-Herzegovina (who had been part of the Serbian army), and in Mannheim and Lamsdorf, several prisoners from the Kingdom and Romania and from Bessarabia.

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The recorded material was only partially exploited, listed in a catalogue encompassing all of the recorded songs, compiled by Fritz Bose,⁴ together with a large number of collaborators, including the Berlin-based Romanian professor, Vasile Gh. Luța. Moreover, the Romanian songs became the subject of a PhD dissertation written by Elsa Ziehm,⁵ while the folk stories remained unpublished.

The subsequent political and social events, particularly World War II, caused Doegen's initiative to fade into obscurity, becoming, one might say, a taboo;⁶ it was brought back into the spotlight around the centenary of the Great War, when numerous scholars published important studies and collections of texts.⁷

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Thus, for almost a century, the only source of information regarding the records obtained from the prisoners from World War I (records that are part of the holdings of the *Sound Archive* in Berlin) has been the book edited by W. Doegen: *Unter fremden Völker*,⁸ which also comprised Hermann Urtel's report titled *Romanische Völker*.⁹ The report is highly enlightening, showing the results of the interviews conducted with the French, Belgian, Italians, Portuguese and Romanian prisoners, as well as with several Spanish speakers from the French or Algerian armies and even with certain national minorities from France (the Basques and Catalans), Italy (the Albanians), and the Kingdom of Romania (the Dobrujan Turks). The Roma were mainly investigated for the oral culture of their *countries* of origin.¹⁰

⁴ Fritz Bose, *Lieder der Völker: die Musikplatten des Instituts für Lautforschung an der Universität Berlin, Katalog und Einführung* (Berlin-Schöneberg: Hesse 1935).

⁵ *Rumänische Volksmusik. Dargestellt an den Schallaufnahmen des Instituts für Lautforschung an der Universität Berlin* (Berlin-Halensee: Max Hesses Verlag, 1939).

⁶ Margit Berner, Annette Hoffmann, Britta Lange, *Sensible Sammlungen. Aus dem anthropologischen Depot* (Hamburg: Filo Fine Arts, 2011). This also explains why, despite the *Lautarchiv* having a rich collection of folk narratives, these were not considered by the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (1977-2015).

⁷ Just to name a few: Britta Lange, "Archival Silences as Historical Sources. Reconsidering Recording of Prisoners of War (1915-1918) from the Berlin Lautarchiv," *SoundEffects* 7, no. 3 (2017): 47-60; Ignazio Macchiarella, Emilio Tamburini, *Le voci ritrovate. Canti e narrazioni di prigionieri italiani della Grande Guerra negli archivi sonori di Berlino* (Udine: Nota, 2018).

⁸ Wilhelm Doegen, *Unter fremden Völker. Eine neue Völkerkunde* (Berlin: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1925).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 338-350.

¹⁰ The Romanian-speaking Romani people (their names written here in accordance with their personal files) are: Dimitri Dominik, Anton Altomoi, Mihai Dinu, Ioan Florea, Nikolai Florja, Alexandru Ion, Marin

In the following, I shall address two pieces of information regarding the Romanian people, from H. Urtel's report.

1. When the researchers arrived in the Lamsdorf camp, an elderly general asked them what they could possibly want from those wretches who were dropping like flies.¹¹ They answered that they were seeking the soul of the Romanian people, in their songs and folktales. The general replied, in a sceptical tone, that these people have no soul.
2. Conversely, Hermann Urtel writes that in no other camp populated by Romance language speakers did he encounter such a treasure trove of original lyrical songs, romances, stories, legends, and church songs, traditional shouts during dances, wedding songs, laments, and incantations as he did among the Romanians. These dark-haired, seemingly uncultured men from the Danube plains, Urtel writes, carried the whirlwind of spiritual life in their hearts. After learning that the German scholars had exclusively scientific tasks, the Romanians "flocked to tell us everything they knew:" songs and fairy tales, some very long. Urtel confesses, "There were times when a storyteller would tell us a fairy tale for over an hour without losing the thread, even if we interrupted him to ask for explanations or repetitions."

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Which Romanian linguistic and folkloric material was included in the *Sound Archive* in Berlin? How important is it now and in the years to come?

I know of 45 files that each contain a different number of sheets, as follows:

1. The personal data files: date and place of birth, the prisoner's place/places of residence until the age of 6 and between the ages of 7 and 20, their mother tongue and other spoken languages, whether or not they could read and write, which school they attended, their ecclesiastical affiliation, and the musical instruments they played. Although brief, these records are highly valuable today because the names of many of those questioned do not appear in other sources (in war memoirs, official documents, etc.).¹²

Oprea, Ramadan Salibota, Marin Oprea. Their performance was studied by Christiane Fennesz-Juhasz, "Sound recordings of Romani in German and Austrian prisoner-of-war camps 1915-1918. Protagonists, contexts and contents," in Kirill Kozhanov, Mikhail Oslon, Dieter Halwachs (eds.), *Das amen godi pala Lev Čerenkov. Romani historija, čhib taj kultura* (Graz: Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Treffpunkt Sprachen, Forschungsbereich Plurilingualismus, 2017), 188-209, especially 194-201. See also Doegen, *Unter fremden Völker*, 157-176.

¹¹ The mortality rate among the Romanian prisoners was around 27%, while, in the case of the French or British prisoners, it oscillated between 2% and 3%.

¹² From among the three Bessarabian people recorded in the Berlin archive, namely Ioan Huțu, 25 y.o., from Parcani/Ogjewski/Rezina, Vladimir Burduja, 29 y.o., from Hinăței/Ignăței, and Dominik Dimitri, born

2. Texts: sung, recited or recounted by the prisoners, written by themselves or by someone else, later phonetically transcribed into German by H. Urtel. According to the statistics compiled by Else Ziehm,¹³ the songs had been recorded on disks from 14 farmers, 13 handymen, 1 merchant, 1 accountant. In 2 cases, the profession is undeclared. The interviewees' places of origin are as follows: 3 from Oltenia, 10 from Muntenia (2 from Bucharest), 13 from Moldavia and 3 from Bessarabia.

The collection compiled by the *Sound Archive* holds a relatively small number of documents: less than 100. However, it differs, from many viewpoints, from the folklore collections present in Romania: primarily because it was created using materials gathered in prisoner-of-war camps, specifically in the officers' quarters, and that only men between the ages of 20 and 40 were exclusively interviewed. They were selected from among those who volunteered, which does not guarantee that they were the best connoisseurs of folklore, or that there were no others just as good as them;¹⁴ however, the interviewers did not have extensive scholarly knowledge of Romanian folklore and thus accepted everything they were told. According to Urtel, the purpose of the endeavour was to understand the soul of certain peoples in certain extreme conditions. To what extent it succeeded is a completely different issue.

The working method for collecting the oral literature was also highly unusual. Each singer/reciter/storyteller wrote down the text they would read aloud in front of the microphone, but the recording itself only lasted for 3 minutes at most, given the fact that, at the time, the disks and wax cylinders were very expensive. Most of the text was kept on paper – some texts were written by others, by dictation, in an enviable calligraphy, but the name of the person who had written the text down is missing.

In researching the songs published by Elsa Ziehm, the first thing that stands out is that although the performers are from Bessarabia or from the Kingdom of Romania before the Great Union, many of the recorded motifs are also shared by the folklore of Transylvania, which thus offers solid evidence of the unity of Romanian folklore as a whole. Religious songs, carols, laments, and traditional shouts during dances or weddings were collected; given the age of the informants, many of the recorded poetic motifs are part of the larger sphere of love poetry: *Dragostea de unde-ncepe: vara din busuioc verde, iarna din sân de la fete* [From where does love sprout? In the summer, from green basil, in the winter, from young girls' bosom], or: *Plânge inimioara-n mine ca un copil de trei zile* [How my little heart wails, like a three-day-old

in 1880, in Ceadâr-Lunga/Bendery, only Huțu (Guțu?) appears on the lists of Bessarabian soldiers from World War I. This information was provided on 29 August 2023 by Andrei Emilciuc, author of the work titled *Ostașii basarabeni în primul război Mondial (1914-1918)* [The Bessarabian soldiers in the First World War (1914-1918)] Volume I, 2nd edition (Chișinău: Editura Tehnica-Info, 2018).

¹³ *Rumänische Volksmusik*, 1-2.

¹⁴ For instance, in Ioan Huțu's file (PK 0501-0009.tif), M. Friedwagner notes: "*Im ganzen Lager, der einzige der noch rumänische Lieder weiß*" [He was the only one in the entire camp who still knew Romanian songs], which is unlikely, unless he were the only Romanian speaker in that particular camp.

babe], but the text continues with *Copilașul plânge, tace, inimioarei n-am ce-i face* [But the babe weeps and settles, while for my heart I can do nought];¹⁵ the only consolation the singer has left is that he would soon see his lover again (no. 6, 7, texts sung by Costea Bobocea, 27 y.o., a farmer from Suraia/Putna); we also have the song of the one who “*să duci la Moscal,*” meaning the one joining the Russian army (sung by Ioan Huțu, 25 y.o., a farmer from Parcani/Rezina), as well as other motifs from marching songs: *Fi-re-ai, maică, blestemată/De ce nu m-ai făcut fată/Să stau cu tine pe vatră? Și m-ai făcut un fecior, să dau țărilor ocol* [Curse you, mother / For not making me a girl / So we could just sit by the fireplace. / Alas, you made a lad, to roam the foreign lands] (no. 12: Iancu Anghel, 26 y.o., a farmer from Valea Boierească Colibașu, Mehedinți); the prisoner laments in the well-known verses: *un rău trece, altul vine* [one hardship passes, along comes another] (no. 16: Costică Ionescu, 32 y.o., a farmer from Băsești/Bacău); the messenger-bird motif is also present, as an entity that tells the hero that his lover misses him (no. 14: Vasile Jalbă, undeclared profession, from Dărăbani pe Prut); several notes of jealousy and curses also appear in certain texts, in situations in which the prisoner suspects his lover of leaving him: *De-i gândi, mândră, la mine? Să-ți dea Dumnezeu mult bine./ De-i gândi în altă parte/Să-ți dea Domnu greutate, / Greutate cu caru,/Sănătate cu dramu* [If you think of me, lass / May God fare you well. / Should you think of another / May God grant you trouble, / Loads of hardships / Health in scraps] (no. 11: played on a flute and sung aloud, by Jeristeanu, from Cărpiniș-Crasna/Gorj); fashionable songs (*lăutărești* – played by the ear on a fiddle, or a lute) were also recorded: *the song of Marița from Rușava* (no. 12, performed by Iancu Anghel, 26 y.o., a farmer from Valea Boierească Colibașu/Mehedinți) or *Marița from Prahova* (no. 28, by Marin Oprea, 24 y.o., violinist, from Prahova/Ploiești); the texts contain a specific extra-Carpathian vocabulary and confirm the more sensual character of the lyrics from those regions compared to what is known from Transylvania: *Dar aseară la fântână/Te prinsei cu trei de mână,/Unul ținea cobilița/Și doi sărutau gurița* [But last night by the well / You were caught holding hands with three, / One was holding the yoke / And two were kissing your lips] (no. 29, sung with violin accompaniment, by Marin Oprea, 24 y.o., violinist, from Prahova/Ploiești); a song with an even more pronounced sensuality was recorded (no. 30: shouted by Vasile Stenzel, 32 y.o., accountant, from Roman, accompanied on flute by Jeristeanu, from Cărpiniș-Crasna/Gorj); sometimes the function of a text is modified, for example, the song of the imprisoned becomes that of the prisoner (no. 14: with Vasile Jalbă, from Darabani on the Prut), but the most unexpected change of function represents *Maică, inimă de piatră/Mai cobori din cer odată./Și vin la bordeiul meu,/Să vezi cum trăiesc și eu. [...]/Să știu, maică, că-i veni/Drumul ți l-aș pardosi/Cu nisip piatră mărunță/Ca să vii, maică, mai iute* [Mother, heart of stone / Descend from the heavens once more / Come down to my hovel / And see how I live [...] / If I knew you on your way / I would pave your way / With gravel, sand and paste, / So that you would come in haste] (no. 15, by Nicolae Gheorghie, 31 y.o., from Șerdani/Dâmbovița); the motif belongs to

¹⁵ If not marked otherwise, the English translations of the Romanian folk lyrics were made by the translator of the present article – A.C.

the love song, but given that the text had been recorded on 10 August 1917, it could actually allude to the appearance of the Virgin Mary, in Fatima, every month beginning with 13 May 1917; *the song of the hardworking peasant* speaks of agricultural work (no. 22, by Vasile Ştenzel, 33 y.o., accountant, from Roman); texts with social accents were recorded: *Radu the outlaw* (no. 8: Jerişteanu, from Cărpiniş/Gorj) or *the song of the ciocoi* (no. 18: Ioan Marin Dobre, 35 y.o., from Ilfov/Bucharest); the Danube ballad *Chirai – Chiralina* is recited (no. 25, Marin Tudor, 32 y.o., bricklayer, from Roşeti-Voinaţi/Ialomiţa); *satirical songs* are also present, such as the one about *the woman who wants a husband and a servant* (no. 26, Anton Altomoi, 26 y.o., from Ghindigeni, Bârlad/Tutova) or about *the lazy woman* (no. 34, by Peride Stoica, 23 y.o., from Vutcani/Fălciu). The most accomplished text, however, is *Murguleţ, my little horse*, in which the horse reproaches its master for entering all the taverns, giving it switches instead of hay and stars instead of grains (no. 24, sung by Ion Alexandru, 39 y.o., a fiddler from Buzău). A few words must be said about the folk prose texts recorded in the camps from the Romanian speaking prisoners of war, all of which were unique. We must note that the method used by the field researchers, that of asking the storytellers to write down their texts, distorts the natural storytelling, leading to the summarisation of the action of a theme, because the storyteller, unaccustomed to writing down a text, quickly tires and tends to omit details. Nevertheless, the texts included in the *Lautarchiv* give us a general indication of the themes that linger in the memory of the prisoner storytellers, which, for the purpose set by the *Sound Archive*, may be sufficient.

What stands out first is a life story (*Lebensgeschichte*) told by Salibota Ramadan, 34 y.o., from Roşiorii de Vede and from Alexandria/Turnu Măgurele (PK 1006), preserved only on a disk. It is followed by *incantations for the evil eye, boils, and bad blisters*, written by the accountant Vasile Stenzel, 33 y.o., from Roman, and by Constantin Pesticiu, from Miroslăveşti/Suceava (PK 1044/0003-0008). In the dossier of Ioan Huţu (or Guţu?), born in 1891 in Parcani/Rezina, a *Sprachtext* is indicated, which has not been transcribed onto paper; the same person also recounted *the tale of the gypsy's failure while fishing* (PK 0501/0011.tif).

The researchers paid particular attention to the parable of the *Prodigal Son (Verlorener Sohn)*, which has been recorded from all Romance peoples. As it is well-known, this story is recounted only in the Gospel of Saint Luke (15:11-32): a father has two sons, one of whom asks for his part of the inheritance and goes off into the world. He spends all his wealth and ends up starving; he hires himself out as a swineherd and eventually decides to return home, where he would be content if his father hired him as a lowly servant. However, upon seeing him from afar, the father rejoices so much at his return that he immediately gives him new clothing and shoes, places a noble ring on his finger, and prepares a feast as if for someone dead who had come back to life. The other son, who had remained faithful to the family and the household, is dissatisfied with the undeserved attention the father gives to his wayward brother. Three versions were recorded. One from from Jefta Marinkowitsch, originally from Bosnia-Herzegovina, a text that the storyteller wrote in Cyrillic alphabet, which

H. Tiktin transcribed into Latin characters¹⁶ (PK 0573/0015). The second version was recorded from Jerișteanu, from Cărpiniș-Crasna/Gorj (PK 1018); we owe the third version to Enciu [Ienciu] Grigore, from Dracșani/Botoșani (PK 1051/0002); regarding the latter, someone, at some point, wrote on its page *nichts wert*, meaning *worthless*, but this verdict was given mostly due to the fact that the writing itself is hard to decipher and it also contains H. Urtel's corrections. The three versions of the biblical parable are all the more significant as the theme appears to be a rarity in our folklore studies; it does not appear in the rich index compiled by Lazăr Șăineanu, *Basmele românilor* [Romanian fairy tales] (Bucharest, 1895), nor in *Mică enciclopedie a poveștilor românești* [Short encyclopaedia of Romanian stories] by Ovidiu Bîrlea (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și enciclopedică, 1976, 2nd edition, Craiova: Aius, 2014), nor in *Gândirea magico-religioasă la români. Dicționar* [The magical-religious thought among Romanians. Dictionary] by Ion Taloș (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2001).

Moreover, fragments of fairy tales were also recorded: *Three fairy tale fragments*, from Dinu Mihai, 34 y.o., from Strunga/Tg. Frumos (PK 1005) and *a fairy tale beginning*, from Florja Nicolai, 22 y.o., from Goicea Mică/Dolj (PK 1007). A fragment from the well-known fairy tale titled *Harap Alb (Bruchstück aus dem weissen Morr)* recounts the meeting that took place between the prince and an old woman (in other versions, she is deemed to be Saint Friday or Saint Sunday); the fragment was told by Fekiet Anton, 34 y.o., from Răcăciuni/Bacău (PK 1022/0003); H. Urtel notes "Ausgabe Weigand, S. 4," which proves that he had identified the passage in the linguist from Leipzig' 1910 translation of Creangă's fairy tale. The text is indeed a fairy tale that had been learned from the book, which is probably the first, or one of the first records of fairy tales learned from printed works in the Romanian folklore studies. It comes in addition to the nine unique versions used by O. Bîrlea in his important monograph dedicated to Ion Creangă's stories.¹⁷

Some of the recorded texts are part of a highly important segment of the Romanian fairy tale topology: this is the case of *The Tale of God and Saint Peter* (PK 1008, told by Robu Mihai, b. in 1883 in Boghicea/Roman). This is a legendary story in which St. Peter is the victim of an evil and thoughtless man. Even more well-known is/was the tale of *Empress Ileana Cosânzeana, from whose braid the flower sings, and nine empires listen* (PK 1010, told by Ieremia Ion, 32 y.o., from Tigvani/Curtea de Argeș). Two tales deal with the motif of the emperor's daughter becoming a *strigoi*; in the first one titled *The Tale of the Emperor's Daughter Who Became a Strigoi and Ate the Guards Placed at Her Tomb* (PK 1009, told by Sandu Stan, 23 y.o., born in Budești/Ilfov), and the second one, contaminated with other motifs, is titled *The Tale of the Disobedient Son* (PK 1012, written and told by Constantin Constantinescu, 27 y.o., from Cărpiniș/Craiova): the boy sets out into the world and breaks the spell of a barber

¹⁶ On page PK PK 0573/0013.tif, H. Urtel notes: "Nach der cyrillischen Schrift des Sprechers in entsprechende rumänische Orthographie umgesetzt von Prof. Tiktin."

¹⁷ O. Bîrlea, *Poveștile lui Creangă* [Creangă's stories] (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1967), 64. The book actually makes no mention of G. Weigand's translation.

and a city where at noon, the church and half of the city falls into darkness; he also breaks the spell of a princess turned *strigoi*, after which he becomes emperor over two empires.

Three other, more difficult to find and to classify fairy tales were also recorded: in the first, *The Tale of the Naughty Child* (PK 1011, told by Andronik Nastas, 39 y.o., from Brăhășești/Tecuci), the protagonist kills Red Beard, thus freeing the maiden and marries her. The second, *The Tale of an Emperor* (PK 1047/0003-4 and 0017-0021, told by Sandu Stan, from Budești/Ilfov), depicts the motif of the traitor-mother. The third is a fairy tale revolving around animals: *The Tale of the Kitten*. It depicts the adventures of a cat, a fox, a wolf, a boar and a bear (PK 1023/0003-5, told by Badea Dumitru, 30 y.o., from Rotunda/Romanai).

Judging by the material gathered from the Romanian speakers in the German prison camps, we could say that the goal set by H. Urtel, as a response to the question raised by the general in Lamsdorf, namely that “they were seeking the soul of the Romanian people, in their songs and folktales,” was fulfilled only to a small extent. There were too few people interviewed and too few texts collected to achieve what the *Lautarchiv* had truly set out to do.

Nonetheless, what exactly had been accomplished through the immense work carried out by the 50 scholars, over the course of three years of contact with the prisoners and over the course of a decade of hard desk work, archiving the entire material that is accessible to us today? First and foremost, the collection of linguistic and folk culture material from over 250 idioms spoken at that time on four continents was accomplished; today's researchers can observe the evolution of some of the spoken idioms or the disappearance of others, with the linguistic material from Berlin being indispensable for such research. Without the results obtained through the Doegen project, we would not have been able to materialize what was in the minds and souls of past generations. The results of the Doegen project constitute an important link in the evolution of popular mentality and in people's attitudes towards war, which could not have been achieved by any other means. We would have lost the opportunity to learn about the intellectual and cultural phenomena occurring in the mind and soul of a person in extreme conditions, such as a prisoner of war; likewise, we would not have known what the human mind could (re)produce in the situation created by the first great world conflagration.

The material collected by the *Lautarchiv* will serve not only linguists and folklorists, not only researchers of oral traditions, but also those who studying human mentality, psychologists, and historians. As mentioned above, through the personal records that include the essential biographical data of the prisoners, the collection is also useful in identifying those who were taken prisoner, information that cannot be found in official documents, memoirs, or other sources. I would dare to say that this is merely the beginning of a longer series of endeavours to exploit the *Sound Archive* in Berlin. For the time being, we cannot even foresee all the benefits that will be obtained from this material in the future. Therefore, the duty of current generations is to make this material available to today's and tomorrow's specialists, in well-made editions.

The collection of Romanian folklore represents a small selection of almost all the folklore genres known to Romanians from the Old Kingdom, from Bessarabia, as well as to

some of those at a distance from the Romanian state (Bosnia-Herzegovina), which can be compared with what we know from Greater Romania at the end of the war. It is very important that we have attestations of certain themes in numerous localities, which do not appear in other collections. They may help decipher some trends in the evolution of our folklore. It is also important to know the vocabulary used by the prisoners and the influences that can be detected in the language of speakers of multiple languages (the Romanians from Bessarabia or the Roma people, for whom state or linguistic borders played a relatively minor role).

Translated from Romanian by Anca Chiorean