



THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY
The Chapel "St. Apostles Peter and Paul"
Incorporated in August 1993, New York

Symposium

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Relativism: The Erosion of Objectivity. The Truth is in the “Eye” of the Beholder

Preliminaries in identity

The issue of identity has an ontological character. That is why it cannot be uprooted. When problems arise in relation to identity in one's life, often that is classified as a mental illness, such as schizophrenia.

Personal identity is, generally speaking, based on kinship by blood and culture, shared history, sense of belonging and language.

Language is particularly important for identity because it shapes one's conscience and it builds the sense of belonging and thus it builds loyalty to a group, a community, a nation. What Karl Deutsch says about community can be applied to nation as well. A community, he writes, is “a socially standardized system of symbols which is a language” that allows for “an integrated pattern or configuration of communicating, remembering and acting.”¹

When we communicate, in conscious and unconscious ways, we communicate who we are, which is like making ourselves accessible to others, or even more, like giving ourselves to others, and this is a synergetic work, divine and human, because we give what we have received from God.

Speaking about the ontological dimension of our identity, writer Patricia Snow explains that “God alone has the power to confer identity and individuality on human beings.”²

When, in communication, we give, we give from what we have received from God.

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If the personal identity is a gift, so is the cultural and national identity. One cannot be asked to give it away.

When Jonah Goldberg writes that our mission today is to forget about cultural identity and to promote diversity,³ he ignores the ontological character of identity, as culture and identity are fundamental existential features, and confuses diversity of identities with diversity as a mixture of elements with no given shape and character. He also opposes identity to diversity as if there could not be distinct individuality within diversity.

Nation and nationalism

A nation is based on the “unity of kinship, language and traditions, on the sense of mutual belonging and belonging to a group, a feeling that is strengthened by the duration and durability of the respective group or kin on the same territory”.⁴

As columnist Max Fisher heard in his travels across Europe last year, in the context of the consolidation of the political right in many places, identity is the foundation of a group’s unity; and national identity, in particular, which is often associated with hard-won national sovereignty, which is based on a strong natural human desire to belong, to feel safe, cannot be easily transcended, as it is rooted in popular culture and built into the international order,⁵ and more than anything else, in people’s conscience.

Nationalism is like patriotism then: a strong attachment, a special love for the group that one is part of, with its values, history and other characteristics.

Personal and national identity is cultivated and developed through knowledge of one’s family tree, history, experiences; this education begins at home and lasts the entire life. Knowing one’s history and the history of one’s country is as imperative as knowing of any other school subject such as math and grammar for any educated person.

Nationalism implies as well to assume the past. Yet one cannot assume it only in its possible negative aspects, but also in its positive features and accomplishments that make one be proud to belong there.

Nationalism being related to identity and identity to values that often are understood as sacrosanct, such as religion, ancestors,

tradition, fatherland or motherland, is considered a value in itself, a source of pride and dignity. This type of understanding is clearly different from chauvinistic nationalism that implies discrimination against other groups or nations.

As celebrated Father Constantin Galeriu from Romania said, “Just the way a human being accumulates in his memory a certain life experience based on which he shapes his personality, so are the nations rooted in their own tradition which is reflected in their specific characteristics at personal and community levels”.⁶

Explaining that nations are part of the divine order and not just simply a human making, Fr. Galeriu insists that “there is no pure, unconditional humanity; there is only humanity incorporated in nations.”⁷

Consequently, to be part of a nation and then to love it, is just a normal and natural thing. Yet that is not how everybody thinks.

In his article “How liberals can reclaim nationalism”, published in *The New York Times*, Yascha Mounk asserts that “there is nothing natural about the idea of a nation. Its modern form took shape as a result of deliberate political choices and the construction of elaborate myths.”⁸

Two things must be observed here: first, nationalism, in particular when it is criticized, does not refer to modern history, when empires fell and nations emerged gaining sovereignty. The love of one’s group, tribe, nation, is much older than the time when the term “nation” came to designate groups and tribes. Second, national cultures that give us specific identities can be seen as obstacles only when one wants to invade and conquer, and today that can be done not with arms and armies like in the past but in many more subtle, powerful, sophisticated and dangerous ways. Therefore, nationalism, in as much as it does not degenerate into chauvinism, should be viewed as a virtue, not as a vice, because, as Gilbert Meilaender writes, national cultures “are the very fabric out of which we construct meaningful lives.”⁹

One can ask the question: what is wrong with tendencies to love and maintain national identity even in situations where along a majority live minority groups? Should one stop loving one’s country because of minority groups that co-habit there peacefully? Would it be right for white minorities in typically black nations in Africa, for instance, to try to change their culture and values? The colonists did

just that in the Middle Age in Latin America and elsewhere, and that was a tragedy! In other words, the minorities would not dictate what values a majority has to adopt as long as the majority allows the minority to live by its own values.

How polarized the world has become about the issue of nationalism is evident in statements by leading personalities of leading nations in our time, such as President Emmanuel Macron of France and President Donald Trump of the USA.

In Emmanuel Macron's definition "patriotism is the exact opposition to nationalism; nationalism, which implies care for ourselves first, for our interest, is a betrayal of patriotism,"¹⁰ thus implying that patriotism is care and love of others first. This seems ironic since by "others" the French President certainly means foreigners, in the context of the current migration of foreigners to Europe. And exactly opposite to his assumption, patriotism, meaning love of the father, fatherland, ancestors, is what Macron seems to understand by nationalism.

The identification between nationalism and patriotism was emphatically stated by US President Donald Trump: "You know what I am? I am a nationalist, ok? I am a nationalist. Nationalist. Use that word. Use that word! A total nationalist in the true sense. I am somebody who loves our country," he exclaimed at a political rally in Houston, Texas.¹¹

President Trump's emphatic declaration does come in the context where the love of one's country and nation is, by many masters of suspicion being considered an infraction, and soon, the promoters of a certain type of defacing globalism, will ask for it to be punished.

This type of manipulation of the meaning of the two terms, nationalism and patriotism, as writer Daniel Corbu notices, represent an attempt to reverse established values, to create and promote a programmatic confusion, a dangerous attack on the fundamental value of identity.¹²

Europe, for one, should become a union of nations, unity in diversity; it "should not be denationalized," as "the degradation of traditional values and the suppression of patriotism" represent a serious threat, according to Tomio Okamura.¹³

It is the cultivation of awareness about the irreducibility of the human spirit, freedom and values that gives a person and a nation dignity and power.

Identity, nationalism, globalism

Globalization was defined in too many ways, but a simple definition relates to the ability to share: more, faster, easier. There is nothing negative here.

Why then is globalization often perceived as being an enemy of identity, national in particular? Depends on who is talking and on the interest at hand. One makes of it what one wants it to be. Cultivate a hermeneutics of suspicion and suspicion will grow and spread. Political acrobatics need to be countered, for the objectivity of the process, by the will to listen to the other voice as well: *audietur et altera pars*.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon. It existed and worked in times (and even today) when geographical and cultural borders were in place, and people's sense of identity very strong, if we only think of Hellenism or the Roman Empire or even the Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian empires.

The fact that globalization and borders, or nationalism are not antagonistic realities, is found in another declaration by US President Donald Trump. While US is a global and globalizing power, in his inaugural address he advocated for "renewed borders, solidarity and national reconsolidation."¹⁴

Speaking with the intensity of an ultimatum Mr. Trump's words remind one that just as personal identity implies a constant reconfiguration of memory, so does national identity where the sense of belonging to a group or country, for different reasons might weaken from time to time and it needs to be reconsolidated.

In order to stress the antagonism between nationalism and globalism some authors give qualifiers to the nouns, they use epithets in the sense of the message they want to send, such as, for example, "methodological nationalism" and "global interdependency"¹⁵ for globalism in order to emphasize how negative the first is and how natural and positive the second.

This dilapidating rhetoric, meant to advance one's own more or less hidden agenda, ignores the fact that loving your family first

and your country as well, is a natural human feeling; there is a hierarchy in everything and everything starts with the self, not in the egoistic sense of the term, and then goes farther in circles like the waves produced by a stone thrown into a pond.

Even theologically speaking, Jesus Christ's exhortation "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12, 31) implies that you have to love yourself first.

This rhetoric ignores also the fact that globalization works very well with borders, and as a proof one has to only think of communication, commerce, tourism and the like.

In addition, it is a simplistic mistake to oppose globalism and nationalism as if one has to take sides and even feel guilty for blaming one of the two, the other side, when in fact both have positive implications in one's life. As Gilbert and Peter Meilaender remind us, it is part of being human to live in the permanent constructive tension "between the particular and the universal in our loves, our loyalties and our commitments."¹⁶

In fact, the more we get globalized, the more we feel the need to express our identity as one can demonstrate that the personal phenomenon of identity does not impede the impersonal phenomenon of globalization. Fabio Cinelli puts it this way: "In times of increasing globalization, people want to return to their roots."¹⁷

That can be interpreted also that instead of being antagonistic to identity, globalization even stimulates it.

Borders and identity

Cultural diversity needs to be seen as a blessing, not as a threat. Yet it implies borders, first in people's minds, as diversity implies identity, and second, even geographical.

When Patricia Snow writes that we live in a world of "porous boundaries and blended identities"¹⁸ that does not mean one can generalize. Yes, porous boundaries in some places, and more rigid boundaries in others. We still do not travel the world visa free. And the expression "blended identities" should be taken in the relative sense. First of all, what is a blended identity? One being a Russian-American? St. Paul was a Roman Jew. Cosmopolitanism is not a modern invention. We only need to think of Athens, Ephesus, Jerusalem. In their article "Fences and neighbors," Gilbert and Peter

Meilaender provide a strong theological analysis of the issue of borders and nations. With examples of nations and borders existing in the Old Testament based on God's will and order, and with the example of St. Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17), the authors argue that in order to be good citizens of the world, we need to learn to be good citizens in our smaller worlds which are our nations. They write: "We would do an injustice to our humanity if we had no sense of special obligation to those closely connected to us by nature and history."¹⁹

And what is more difficult to observe is that "even the most important fences serve, in the providence of God, not as barriers to shared life, but as invitations."²⁰

And invitations imply good neighborly relationships, mutual respect and good will. That is the basis of one being open to guests. But if one finds one's house invaded, occupied and where the owner will be forced to change his habits and lifestyle because of the uninvited stranger, that will not lead to peace.

Trying to argue against border, political theorist Joseph Carens says that "borders have guards and the guards have guns."²¹

Yes, that is true, yet that does not mean conflict unless one does not respect somebody else's territory, possession, values, person, community the way one wants to be respected by others, Respect makes guns unnecessary.

Jonah Goldberg asserts that we live in a borderless world already and what we need to do is not to defend old country borders, but the borders of civility and human rights.²²

Goldberg is wrong first of all because of generalizations. We do not live in a borderless world. Unless he means communication through satellite. But not even there. This assumption is just rhetorical in order to say that we need to watch other types of borders, like shifting attention from what happens at the traditional geographical borders of our world countries to something else; like don't mind about invasions; think of civility. Yet, watching our geographical borders does not impede actions to improve civility and human rights in the world, regardless of the type of borders.

In what he says it is evident that Goldberg refers to the waves of migration to Europe of people from Middle Eastern and African countries, migration often defined on the basis of human rights. Yet human rights have to be applied to the local population as well, who

wants or does not want the migrants. Uprooting the newcomers from their cultures will not help them integrate in the new systems and a sense of “injustice,” and marginalization on their part would be in many ways inevitable. The yellow vests movement in France is a telling example.

Maybe the countries that are destinations of these migrations, together can do something like creating safe havens in areas where migrants are coming from or to improve political and economic conditions in those countries.

Goldberg suggests that one can leave the door of one’s family house large open for anybody to come in and take things as needed for as long as the owner is concerned with militating for civility and human rights. Nobody will do that, not even himself who advises it.

Yet, there is a paradox and an irony about those who preach globalization in the sense in which Goldberg does. R. R. Reno describes it: “Thought needs to be given to the ways in which globalism disenfranchises ordinary people and empowers the technocratic elite. It’s an interesting paradox that the most ardent supporters of a ‘borderless world’ live in gated communities, don’t mingle with others on public transportation, and channel their children toward a narrow set of elite educational institutions.”²³

Populism and democracy

According to Steven Erlangen, “populism is not easy to define; the roots of its success are varied and its adherents do not represent a single ideology, even if they all criticize uncontrolled migration, especially of Muslims. But their success is fragmenting traditional politics and making coalition governments harder to build.”²⁴

While hard to define, still, populism should not be given meanings that the term refuses to accept. The simplest definition is that populism is the voice of the people, or the voice of God, if the old Latin proverb is to be invoked: *vox populi, vox Dei*.

If democracy rests fundamentally on people’s direct participation to the decision-making process related to their present life and future destiny, then that’s exactly populism and it should not be dismissed easily by giving it pejorative meanings, but rather, one should see what happened that its voice became so strong in our time.

Accusing is not the solution. The solution comes from understanding the cause.

The rise of what some call populism and nationalism, due in particular to new waves of migration, is in some circles considered to be anti-democratic, which is an irony and a paradox. That assumption brings about the question: is democracy based on receiving immigrants? Is it based on mixing people of different cultures and mindsets with the locals and forcing the locals to adapt themselves to the newcomers' needs and habits? Is this what democracy meant in ancient Athens and in democratic nations in previous times until now?

Steven Erlangen is right to report that "what ties the populists together... is that they 'ride the wave of anxiety – about globalization, migration and new phenomena – and appeal to those looking for some protection'. Anxieties about national identity are particularly strong in the former Communist countries which were subjugated by the Soviet Union and have only recently regained sovereignty."²⁵

What Erlangen says about the former Communist countries is ok, yet the same phenomenon is visible, even in stronger ways in former non-communist democracies such as Italy, Greece, Austria and even Germany.

The "upheavals in identity politics," dues in particular to migration, but also to economic inequality, like in France, led people to seriously question the value of "liberal market democracy", according to Roberto Menotti, a senior advisor at the Aspen Institute Italia.²⁶

As much as one would like to blame and pejoratize the notion of populism, it remains a reality not to be ignored. Even those who criticize nationalism or the leaders of European institutions cannot dismiss populism as they are being elected by that population and in their electoral campaigns implicitly put the interest of their nations first, thus at least in part, allowing themselves to be called populists and nationalists.²⁷

The post-truth era

We have never lived in a more confusing and distorted world order than the current one where to lie is ordered and rewarded, where blatant individualistic behavior is becoming a virtue, and where fake news are constantly invading our brains.

William Davis calls this type of world and time the “post-truth” era. It is actually where the world order is the world disorder.²⁸

The time when the absolute values used to cohabitate in harmony with the relative values, when the moral absolutes represented a last resort in decision making, standard of conduct or relational and existential dilemmas, is gone. What we witness today is the relativization of the absolute or the absolutization of the relative.

The relativization of absolute values is described by David Brooks in the following terms in an article about the cultivation of lies: “You have to find your own truth. This is the privatization of meaning. It’s not up to the schools to teach a coherent set of moral values or a society. Everybody chooses his or her values. Come up with your own answers to the life’s ultimate questions.”²⁹

This is what in fact, leads to moral confusion and to losing the sense of purpose and direction in life.

In fact, the moral absolutes that build character, strength and a clear sense of purpose come from “values that are created and passed down by strong, self-confident communities and institutions. People absorb their values by submitting to communities and institutions and taking part in the conversations that take place within them.”³⁰

But that seems to be history now. And history, as an element that strengthens personal and national identity is dismissed by the new preachers of a certain type of globalism.

In his book *Suicide of the West: How the rebirth of tribalism, populism, nationalism and identity politics is destroying American democracy*, Jonah Goldberg deplores the “decadence and dysfunction of today’s public discourse” and prophesizes that we are “standing at the end of history.”³¹

Goldberg might be right that we stand at the end of history, but certainly not because of the personal and national identity issues. On the contrary, that might be due to the intention to suppress identity and plunge the world into an amorphous mass, through the manipulation of meaning, the normalization of lie, the globalization of disloyalty. As Steven A. Long recognizes, we live “in a time of widespread blindness toward the truth.”³²

The reversal of the moral order of the world is evident, for example, in the fact that “once controversial issues like divorce,

sexuality, moderate drug use and the evergreen mistake of cursing on a hot mic are no longer fatal for political careers. Character issues still pose a threat, yet Mr. Trump faced an array of them – from dishonesty and extramarital behavior to alleged abuse of women – and he won the presidency,” writes Lisa Lerer, reporting that what used to be a disqualifier for a high public function seems not to count any more.³³

In fact, “refusing to admit any missteps may be the best path to rally support.”³⁴

The strategy used in the post-truth era works as follows: “Never apologize, always play offense, attack the ‘fake news,’ and finally distract from the issue by kick-starting a new controversy.”³⁵

One recognizes Donald Trump in this picture and how confusingly the values system in the USA, but also in the world, has been transformed.

Conclusion

In a permissive society, as Robert Bellah et al. in their book *Habits of the heart*, call ours, where everything is possible and is being allowed, for as long as one knows how to lobby for a certain interest, and how to manipulate the system and, sometimes, people’s minds, the relativization of values is not a surprise. Moral absolutes seem to be gone. This is how the confusion begins. And confusion is the appropriate context one needs to create in order to change the order, to reinterpret, or deliberately misinterpret concepts, notions, definitions to advance one’s interest.

Objectivity has become a historical and theoretical notion. Like beauty, the truth is in the eye of the beholder, of the one who has the power and the means to manipulate in order to convince. This becomes a sort of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, the war of all against all, where those with fewer scruples will win.

What do we need in such a situation? We need to return to or reinvent principiality or moral structures, or, to use a stronger term, moral absolutes.

NOTES:

¹ See Paul Stock, "Towards a language of 'Europe': History, rhetoric, community", in *The European Legacy*, vol. 22, nrs. 5-6, August-September 2017, p. 648.

² Patricia Snow, "Empathy is not charity," in *First Things*, nr. 276, October 2017, p. 45.

³ See R. R. Reno, "You better like it," in *First Things*, nr. 286, October 2018, p. 49.

⁴ Theodor Damian, "Nationalism and patriotism in Eminescu," [in Romanian], in *Vatra Veche*, year XI, nr. 4 (124), April 2019, p. 6.

⁵ Max Fisher, "Borders, nationalism and the fight for a unified Europe," in *The New York Times*, vol. CLXVII, nr. 58016, Saturday, July 7, 2018, p. A7.

⁶ See Răzvan Codrescu, "Nation and national church" [in Romanian], in *Certitudinea*, Year II, nr. 26, 2018, p.2.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ Yasha Mounk, "How liberals can reclaim nationalism," in *The New York Times*, International edition, Monday, March 5, 2018, p. 1.

⁹ Gilbert Meilaender and Peter Meilaender, "Fences and neighbors," in *First Things*, nr. 285, August/September, 2018, p. 23.

¹⁰ See Peter Baker, "Trump bashes Macron and defends decision to skip cemetery visit," in *The New York Times*, Wednesday, November 14, 2018, p. A6.

¹¹ *Idem*, "'You know what I am? I'm a nationalist'," in *The New York Times*, vol. CLVIII, nr. 58125, Wednesday, October 24, 2018, pp. A12-13.

¹² Daniel Corbu, "Romania 100 or on globalism, nationalism and national identity," [in Romanian] in *Feedback*, year XV, nr. 9-10, September-October 2018, p. 2.

¹³ See Philip J. Heijmans, Hana de Goeij, "Protests greet far right leaders," in *The New York Times*, vol. CLXVII, nr. 57814, Sunday, December 17, 2017, p. A4.

¹⁴ R. R. Reno, "Globalism vs. nationalism," in *First Things*, nr. 272, April 2017, p. 4.

¹⁵ Cornel Ungureanu and Paolo Monti, "Habermas on religion and democracy: Critical perspectives," in *The European Legacy*, Vol. 22, nrs. 5-6, August-September 2017, p. 524.

¹⁶ Gilbert Meilaender and Peter Meilaender, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁷ See Katrin Brennhold, "Bavarian millennials embrace tradition for Oktoberfest," in *The New York Times*, Thursday, October 11, 2018, p. A6.

¹⁸ Patricia Snow, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹⁹ Gilbert Meilaender and Peter Meilaender, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

²¹ See Gilbert Meilaender and Peter Meilaender, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²² See R. R. Reno, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

²⁴ Steven Erlanger, "Populism thrives in Eastern Europe, widening a split in the EU," in *The New York Times*, vol. CLXVII, nr. 57796, Wednesday, November 29, 2017, p. A8.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. A8.

²⁶ See Jason Horowitz, "Election in Europe shows populism ascendant, but so is polarization," in *The New York Times*, vol. CLXVIII, nr. 58341, Tuesday, May 28, 2019, p. A10.

²⁷ Max Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. A7.

²⁸ William Davies, "The age of the post-truth politics," in *The New York Times*, Opinion section, August 24, 2016.

²⁹ David Brooks, "Five lies our culture tells us," in *The New York Times*, Tuesday, April 16, 2019, p. A25.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ See R. R. Reno, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

³² Steven A. Long, „Magisterial irresponsibility,” in *First Things*, nr. 286, October 2018, p. 45.

³³ Lisa Lerer, "Do character issues matter in age of Trump? Democrats will find out", in *The New York Times*, Wednesday, December 5, 2018, p. A20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

“The Indispensable Nation” Current Significance and Foreign Policy Implications

1. The concept of “indispensable nation” in U.S. national security strategy

Twenty-three years ago, in January 1997, in his second inaugural address, President Clinton stated:

When last we gathered, our march to this new future seemed less certain than it does today. We vowed then to set a clear course to renew our Nation. In these 4 years, we have been touched by tragedy, exhilarated by challenge, strengthened by achievement. America stands alone as *the world’s indispensable nation*. [my emphasis]¹

One year later, invited to the NBC’s *Today Show* of February 19, 1998 Madeleine Albright, at that time US Secretary of State, said:

It is the threat of the use of force [against Iraq] and our line-up there that is going to put force behind the diplomacy. But if we have to use force, it is because we are America; *we are the indispensable nation* [my emphasis]. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us.²

Those words and the concept have been resilient in time and for this reason they deserve a reexamination in the current domestic and international circumstances. Such a reexamination is useful not only because the world of today is different from that of twenty-three years ago, but also because the last national security strategy as it has been developed by the Trump Administration is different from those formulated by the previous US administrations since the end of the Cold War.

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Probably, the first document of national importance in which the US “indispensability” was stressed was the National Security Strategy of 1994 that stated that:

As the world’s premier economic and military power, and its premier practitioner of democratic values, the U.S. is *indispensable* [my emphasis] to the forging of stable political relations and open trade.

But “indispensable nation” became an emblematic concept after President Clinton’s speech mentioned above and the interview of Secretary Albright. It was the fourth such concept after George H. W. Bush’s “new world order,” Krauthammer’s “unipolar moment,” and Clinton Administration’s “strategy of engagement and enlargement.”

On September 11, 1990, after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe but before the disintegration of Soviet Union, President Bush addressed a joint session of Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and Federal Deficit. On that occasion he defined the “new world order” in the following terms:

Out of these troubled times, ... -- a *new world order* [my emphasis] -- can emerge: a new era -- freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony. Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we’ve known. A world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak.³

Conceived one year and four months before the disintegration of Soviet Union, the idea of a new world order and of a strategy based on it expressed the American people’s and government’s satisfaction and relaxation caused by the end of the Cold War. It implied the consideration of Soviet Union as an equal superpower and a potential partner in the edification of new international structures.

Delivered forty days after the Iraq intervention in Kuwait, President Bush’s speech contained a friendly invitation to President Gorbachev to agree with his administration’s policy with regard to the Persian Gulf in general, and Iraq in particular. If not to be even a

partner in a military intervention against Iraq, that he probably had in his mind at that time and would achieve during the following spring.

But if the “new world order” was the publicly expressed and worldwide advertised foreign policy doctrine of the Bush Administration, “the unipolar moment” was the essential foreign policy concept in which the future neocons believed. Acting from inside and outside the administration they energetically tried to promote their political and military views and to develop and implement a US foreign policy consistent with their interests.

On this way, in a significant article published in the 1990-1991 winter edition of *Foreign Affairs*, and probably written a short time after President Bush’s speech of September 11, 1990, Charles Krauthammer affirmed:

The immediate post-Cold War world is not multipolar. It is *unipolar*. [my emphasis] The center of world power is the unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its Western allies. There is but one first-rate power and no prospect in the immediate future of any power to rival it.⁴

Due to this situation the United States must act such as to consolidate its unique position in the world, and to prevent any other country from achieving a comparable power status. This country must shape the new world order in a realist manner, in accordance with the US interests and not in accordance with an idealistic and superficial vision of multilateral international cooperation. Subsequently, he concluded that because:

We are in for abnormal times. Our best hope for safety in such times, as in difficult time past, is in American strength and will - the strength and will to lead a unipolar world, unashamedly laying down the rules of world order and being prepared to enforce them.⁵

Although the first Iraq War was not as controversial as the second one, and although during his presidency Soviet Union disintegrated and United States definitely won the Cold War, George H. W. Bush lost the 1992 presidential elections, and Bill Clinton was elected.

As an exponent of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, he selected Anthony Lake as his national security adviser. Lake had been a professor of international relations and former US diplomat sharing the liberal views prevailing at the Five College Consortium

where he had been teaching. As a result, the 1994 version of the US National Security Strategy got a pleasant and attractive title, “A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement,”⁶ and it pointed out that “[o]ur national security strategy is based on enlarging the community of market democracies while deterring and containing a range of threats to our nation, our allies and our interests.”

In order to achieve this objective, the strategy had three “central components” that were:

- enhancing national security by maintaining a strong defense capability and promoting cooperative security measures;
- working to open foreign markets and spur global economic growth; and
- promotion of democracy abroad.

The strategy was relatively well received by a nation who started to be to some extent skeptical of the utility and results of the First Iraq War, and was waiting to receive significant benefits as a result of the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of Soviet Union and the expected reduction of military expenditures. It was also relatively well received abroad, where it was perceived as expressing the will of the Clinton Administration to significantly reduce the tension with the former Cold War adversaries.

Nevertheless, making abstraction of the attractive title, the manner of presentation of ideas and the wording, there were common elements between the document elaborated under the supervision of President Clinton and National Security Adviser Lake from one side and the article published by Charles Krauthammer four years before from the other side.

Referring to the international situation as it was more than a quarter of a century ago the authors of the National Security Strategy of 1994 remarked that:

the United States has been the “world’s preeminent power;”
the future of Russia has been “uncertain;”
the Chinese regime has been “repressive” although it has assumed a “more important economic and political role in global affairs;”
and
the proliferation of “weapons of mass destruction [has posed] serious threats;”

Subsequently, they concluded that the “American leadership in the world has never been more important [because] ... [w]ithout

our active leadership and engagement abroad threats will fester and our opportunities will narrow.”

This means that in the vision of the authors of the National Security Strategy of 1994 the US world leadership was not only fully deserved but also natural – because the United States was the only remaining superpower and because the US system of market democracy was undoubtedly superior to any other socio-economic and political system. Within this framework, engagement meant a very active participation of the United States in the world politics in order to shape the post-Cold War international system in accordance with the US national interests. And the enlargement of the number of market democracies was necessary because those would be natural allies of the United States and would accept the American leadership.

Formulated in this naked form, the National Security Strategy of 1994 could have been regarded as a strategy for achieving world hegemony not only by the remaining enemies of the United States but also by many of its friends. And not only because of the strategy’s tenets, but also because for the first time after World War II became fashionable in the academia and mainstream media to openly and seriously discuss the opportunity of US world hegemony. A subject that had been taboo for many years.

In parallel the high level of economic corruption, income inequality, decay and treason caused by the transition from centrally planned economies to market economies significantly moderated the enthusiasm generated by the fall of communism as a political dictatorship. Not only in the Soviet Union’s successor states but also in the former communist Central and Eastern European countries segments of the population started to ask themselves about the real objective of the West during the Cold War. Was it the liberation of those countries from the communist political oppression? Or was the destruction of their economic and military power in order to eliminate some powerful and dangerous enemies and competitors in a first stage, and to exploit their populations and natural resources in a second?

Under those circumstances a more stylish expression became necessary in order to avoid using the words “US world hegemony” and “indispensable nation” was brought into the light. As I have observed before it had been employed in the National Security Strategy of 1994, but its use was marginal at that time. To the

contrary, it will be considerably more used after President Clinton's second inaugural address.

As Micah Zenko relates⁷, in 1996 Sidney Blumenthal, a political journalist and James Chace, a foreign policy historian, concluded that "indispensable nation" could be a memorable phrase for defining US role in the post-Cold War era, and they informed Madeleine Albright about it. She appreciated the phrase and introduced it in the current political and diplomatic language. In accordance with Blumenthal's recollection, the meaning of the phrase was that "[o]nly the United States had the power to guarantee global security; [and] without our presence or support, multilateral endeavors would fail."

Taking into consideration the fact that "indispensable nation" together with its implications was perceived by a non-negligible number of countries, politicians and international relations analysts as a stylish label for U.S. world hegemony it is relevant to observe that the concept of hegemony has two significantly different meanings.

2. *The concept of hegemony*

As I have observed in *Non-polarity and International Tension*,⁸ from the vantage point of international relations theory, hegemony implies world or regional domination according to some scholars, but only leadership in the opinion of others. The word hegemony is also used with two related but also different meanings. It is employed for describing the (systemic) state or international situation specific to an international system that has a hegemonic power, but it is also employed to denominate the system itself.

Most British scholars define the concept as leadership, accepted leadership or predominance in accordance with its ancient Greek meaning, while most American scholars define it as dominance or leadership supposing that the meanings of dominance and leadership are synonymous or very close.

The *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines hegemony as "preponderant influence or authority especially of one nation over others," while the *Oxford English Dictionary* explains hegemony as being "leadership, predominance, especially the leadership or predominant authority of one state of a confederacy or union over the others; originally used in reference to the states of ancient Greece,

whence transferred to the German states, and in other modern applications.”

The *New Oxford American Dictionary* refers to hegemony as “leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group over others,” but the *Oxford Universal Dictionary* asserts that hegemony means “leadership, predominance of one state of a confederacy, orig. in ancient Greece.”

The *Columbia Encyclopedia* explains this concept on the basis of a definition formulated by K.J. Holsti in 195, in the *Dividing Discipline*. According to this explanation hegemony means “leadership, dominance, originally of one Greek city-state over others, the term had been extended to refer to the dominance of one nation over others, and, following Gramsci, of one class over others.”

The authors of *World Politics in the 21st Century* wrote that a hegemon or hegemonic state is “[a] country with overwhelming military, political and economic power with the ability to write and enforce the rules of the international system” or a “powerful state in a region that tries to use its military or economic power to dominate countries in the region.”⁹

Mearsheimer defines a hegemon as “a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system” and stressed that:

No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it. In essence, a hegemon is the only great power in the system. A state that is substantially more powerful than the other great powers in the system is not a hegemon, because it faces, by definition, other great powers.”¹⁰

The difference between the American view on hegemony, making leadership equivalent with domination and the British and ancient Greek definitions of this concept as freely accepted leadership is not irrelevant. To the contrary, it is theoretically significant and practically important.

Dominance has its origin in the Latin “dominus” that means lord or master and implies supremacy and control. It is defined as “power and influence over others” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, as “rule, control, authority, ascendancy” in *Dictionary.com* and as “being more *important, strong, or successful* than anything *else*” in the *Cambridge English Dictionary*. But, considerably different, leadership means only to guide or direct a group.

Observing these differences, three questions arise:

- has the United States been a world hegemon since the disintegration of Soviet Union?
- has America been recognized as a world hegemon by the world community of nations in general, and by the other great powers in particular? and
- if this country has been a world hegemon, which was the nature of its hegemony: leadership or dominance?

The answers to these questions are relevant for the topic of this paper and they might be the following.

3. Has the united states been a world hegemon since 1992?

On the basis of the preceding observations and taking into consideration several criteria of assessment (Mearsheimer, 2001, Russett and O'Neal, 2001, Tsaganea, 2014) it seems to me that it is possible to assert the following.

From December 1991 – when the Soviet Union disintegrated – up to the present the international system has been a multipolar system having unequal powers (poles). United States has been a super-power with regard to all defining elements of power, while each of the other four (European Union, Russia, China and Japan) has been a major power with respect to only one or a few elements of power. However, although the United States has been the preeminent world power – or the sole remaining superpower as it is usually called – it has not been a world hegemon according to the criteria usually accepted by most analysts of international relations.

From the disintegration of the Soviet Union until September 11, 2001 America promoted the “new world order” and “engagement and enlargement” (grand) strategies. Both implied US aspiration to global hegemony, but their names were diplomatically selected in order to suggest world tension reduction and cooperation.

The “indispensable nation” was another diplomatic term coined for achieving the same objective, the strategy associated with it being in fact the same as that associated with the “engagement and enlargement” strategy. But, during that interval of time although the United States was by far the most powerful country in the world it was not a world hegemon.

After 9/11 the situation changed to some extent when the doctrine of preemption was developed and formally included in the *Report on the National Security Strategy of the United States* delivered by the White House to the Congress on September 20, 2002. It might have been regarded as a blueprint aimed to make United States a world hegemon under the cover of the war against terrorism, and it is not excluded that this was the intention of the neoconservatives. But the involvement of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars irrevocably compromised the Bush administration and the neocons, and swept away neoconservatives' dreams of world hegemony.

Although the preemption doctrine influenced US foreign policy during the Bush Administration it has not made America a world hegemon. Nevertheless, a number of international events of that time suggest that some foreign nations and governments had the tendency to seriously regard the United States as an aspiring world hegemon. And that perception continued during the Obama Administration although its foreign policy was considerably more restrained and moderated than that of the previous administration.

4. The concepts of world hegemony and indispensable nation

As I have written in the first section of this paper, the phrase “indispensable nation” was coined in 1996, and it was used relatively frequently after President Clinton’s second inaugural address, in 1997. The phrase was a diplomatic term for presenting in a soft manner a basic foreign principle of both George W. H. Bush and Clinton Administrations, in order to make it worldwide acceptable. That principle was that in the post-Cold War era, the United States has had not only the duty but also the right to shape a new world order, or a new international power structure in accordance with its own views and interests for three main reasons. This country was the sole remaining superpower, it had won the Cold War, and the American economic, social and political system has been superior to that of any other country.

Like the words “engagement and enlargement” included in the title of the National Security Strategy of 1994, the phrase “indispensable nation” was considered as diplomatically more efficient than the Bush’s “new world order” for transforming in

reality US aspiration to world hegemony. And to some extent, and especially in diplomatic terms the new terminology was useful. From one side, America's allies and friends were able to support the US hegemonic aspirations by regarding them as freely accepted benign leadership, but without publicly referring to the US foreign policy as hegemonic. From the other side, it is probable that America's competitors and enemies regarded Clinton Administration's foreign policy as aspiration to world domination, but publicly referred to it as being a kind of aspiration to world hegemony not to world domination.

Nevertheless, regardless of various governments' confidential perceptions and their open diplomatic statements, in a number of countries there were political forces who were considering "indispensable nation" as nothing else than a code word for US global hegemony with the meaning of global domination. Those forces were initially limited, but they developed significantly, and for some Western politicians - unexpectedly. These were the sources of the powerful nationalist and populist forces that are today behind President Putin in Russia, President Xi Jinping in China, and some nationalist populist parties of Europe.

5. The national security strategy of 2017 and the concept of indispensable nation

Taking into consideration the relationship between the concepts of world hegemony and indispensable nation from one side and the last U.S. National Security Strategy published on December 2017 from the other side, an interesting and to some extent surprising observation can be made.

Despite the fact that the language of the last strategy is considerably stronger and the military component of the strategy is frequently stressed, the central objective is more limited than that associated with "indispensable nation," Instead to aspire to shape the world order and to implement a kind of global "Pax Americana" as the George H.W. Bush and Clinton Administrations wanted, the Trump Administration aims only to maintain this country's position in the world and to have the economic and military power necessary for achieving three main relatively limited objectives. These

objectives are: successful competition with America's two main competitors and adversaries China and Russia, isolation and sanctioning of rogue states like Iran and North Korea, and defeat of international terrorism.

Theoretically, the strategy is conceived from a classical realist perspective focusing on national interest, power, competition, and the role of very large and powerful countries in world politics. It underlines the symbiosis between the economic and military power and frequently stresses the necessity of increasing both to a considerable extent. But interestingly, the authors of the strategy do not continue to regard the international system as a unipolar one having at its center the United States, but rather as a balance of power system comparable to that of the 19th Century.

Entitling the new US National Security Strategy "America First National Security Strategy,"¹¹ the document states that it:

is based on American principles, a clear-eyed assessment of U.S. interests, and a determination to tackle the challenges that we face. It is a strategy of principled realism that is guided by outcomes, not ideology. It is based upon the view that peace, security, and prosperity depend on strong, sovereign nations that respect their citizens at home and cooperate to advance peace abroad. And it is grounded in the realization that American principles are a lasting force for good in the world.

The authors of the new strategy do not refrain themselves from criticizing the previous strategies and affirm that erroneously:

[s]ince the 1990s, the United States displayed a great degree of strategic complacency. We assumed that our military superiority was guaranteed and that a democratic peace was inevitable. We believed that liberal-democratic enlargement and inclusion would fundamentally alter the nature of international relations and that competition would give way to peaceful cooperation.

In strategy's authors' views these beliefs were not only unrealistic and wrong, but also dangerous because

after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned. China and Russia began to reassert their influence regionally and globally. Today, they are fielding military capabilities designed to deny America access in times of crisis and to contest our ability to operate freely in critical commercial zones during peacetime. In short, they are contesting

our geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor.

Under these circumstances the strategy stresses that “the contest for power” is “a central continuity in history” and that “[t]he present time period is no different.” Currently there are “three main sets of challengers ... against the United States and our allies and partners” and these sets of challengers are:

- “the revisionist powers of China and Russia;”
- “the rogue states of Iran and North Korea;” and
- “the transnational threat organizations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups.”

The challengers “favor repressive systems” and “are actively competing ... in order to shift regional balances of power in their favor”

Like the contests for power “[t]he contests over influence are timeless. They have existed in varying degrees and levels of intensity, for millennia [and] [g]eopolitics is the interplay of these contests across the globe.” Subsequently, the main challengers to American influence and interests in the world are also China and Russia. The two countries try “to erode American security and prosperity” by restraining economic freedom and fairness, by increasing their military power, and by controlling “information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence.”

Taking into consideration that previous administrations’ premise “that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners ... turned out to be false” a new strategy should be conceived and implemented.

This new strategy must put “America First” by focusing on four main responsibilities:

- to protect the American people, the homeland, and the American way of life;
- to promote American prosperity;
- to preserve peace through strength by rebuilding our military so that it remains preeminent, deters our adversaries, and if necessary, is able to fight and win, and

- to advance American influence because a world that supports American interests and reflects American values makes this country more secure and prosperous.

For fulfilling these responsibilities this country “must integrate all elements of America’s national power—political, economic, and military” and its allies and partners must significantly contribute to the US effort.

In this context, in order to accurately compare “America First” with “Indispensable Nation” is necessary to make abstraction of Presidents Trump and Clinton’s different personalities and Secretary Albright’s diplomatic language and to focus on the tenets of the strategies associated with these two phrases.

“Indispensable nation” was in fact the phrase or the code word for US aspiration to world hegemony. However not only the strategies associated with it did not offer the means to achieve it, but any conceivable strategy would have been unable to achieve US world hegemony because the objective itself was by its nature unrealistic and unachievable.

Were great powers that had not been defeated in World War II like Russia, China or India ready to accept US hegemony? Realistically, difficult to believe. Were they regarding themselves as “dispensable” when only the United States was indispensable? Impossible to imagine.

On March 7, 2018 in an interview on the Russian nuclear doctrine for the documentary “The World Order 2018,” President Putin asked rhetorically “Why we would want a world without Russia?”¹² and on this way induced in the minds of the viewers the tacit, but obvious answer “We do not want a nuclear war because the Russian people does not want to perish, and a world without Russia does not deserve to exist.”

5. *Conclusions*

“Indispensable nation” was a diplomatic phrase coined nearly a quarter of a century ago for presenting in more friendly terms Clinton Administration’s grand strategy than “engagement and enlargement” had done. Seven years after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and five years after the disintegration of

Soviet Union a number of governments and political groups around the world started to discretely but perceptibly modify their position toward the United States. They started to be less inclined to regard this as the benevolent giant that has been tirelessly acting for spreading freedom, democracy and economic growth around the world, and to be more disposed to consider it as a classical preeminent world power that aims to achieve world hegemony and aggressively promotes its national interests.

The phrase was relative frequently used during the second term of the Clinton Administration, but was little used since then. As a Republican, George W. Bush was not fond to use a phrase coined by the Democrats. And as a president promoting a moderate foreign policy and having reservations with regard to the realism and feasibility of US world hegemony, Barack Obama was not eager to use a phrase regarded by many as a code word for US global hegemony.

Observing that the second Iraq War instigated by the neocons who were controlling the George W. Bush administration was not only morally unjust but also irrational from a realist perspective I wrote the following in a paper delivered seventeen years ago at the Central and Eastern European International Studies Association Conference in Budapest, Hungary:

An American foreign policy aiming at hegemony conceived as US leadership freely accepted by other nations might be in the US national interest. But one aiming at hegemony defined as domination is definitely against America's vital national interests, because at least some of the other major powers will start to practice balance of power politics against this country. The cohesion of NATO might erode and alliances among the emerging world powers ... might emerge. The international system might evolve toward a type of system resembling more the nineteenth century European Concerto than to the current [in 2003] one.

And, as the authors of the 2017 US National Security Strategy have affirmed, the international system of today is essentially a balance of power system with the realist and neorealist meanings of the term. But in such a system, all great powers are acting for preeminence, and the concept of world hegemony is irrelevant or little relevant. Subsequently, a phrase associated with it is to a large extent

irrelevant. Because in a balance of power system there are not “dispensable” powers. All are “indispensable.”

According to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, it was an absolute truth scientifically proved, that communism was superior to capitalism, and that the communist socio-economic system will necessarily replace the capitalist one. As a result, during the Cold War, Soviet Union promoted an aggressive foreign policy aiming at world supremacy and world hegemony with the meaning of world domination. It fully achieved this objective in Eastern and Central Europe, and it partially achieved it during the first two decades of the Cold War in the communist countries of Asia.

The answer of the West in general and of the United States in particular consisted in the policy of containment, the creation of NATO, the support of the movements for democracy in the communist states and in the struggle against Marxist-Leninist ideology and communist movements in non-communist countries. For many years America was considered as the benevolent superpower that was acting for the spreading of democracy and for increasing the standard of living in many countries around the world and especially in the former communist ones. Subsequently, after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, and the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991-1992, the United States was not regarded as a traditional great power aiming to world hegemony and/or domination although it had remained the sole superpower and its capabilities were considerably superior to any competitor, adversary or enemy.

Having its beginning marked by the “unipolar moment” the last decade of the twentieth century had as one of its main characteristics the wish and will of the other great powers to cooperate with America for relaxing the international tension and for obtaining mutual economic benefits. They acquiesced to the results of the first Iraq War, and regarded the “new world order” and “indispensable nation” as low menacing diplomatic terms and not blueprints for world hegemony and domination. This international situation was highly favorable to the US interests, and the “roaring nineties” were a period of remarkable economic growth and prosperity as Joseph Stiglitz pointed out. At the same time Russia was looking to America as a potential friend and China was tirelessly working to rapidly

develop its national economy and was trying to improve its public image after the Tien an Men Square events.

This international conjuncture beneficial to the United States continued during most of the George W. Bush's presidency. After 9/11 *Le Monde*, that historically had not been too friendly toward the United States" declared that "We are all Americans"¹³ and Condoleezza Rice considered the possibility of cooperating with Russia for developing an advanced antimissile defense system, a relatively unusual position for the national security adviser of a conservative republican president.

The military intervention in Afghanistan, that nobody at that time had expected to become the longest war in US history, was accepted and even supported by most foreign governments being regarded as the natural and just response to the 9/11 attacks. But the reactions to the second Iraq War were significantly different. Britain supported the decision of the Bush Administration, but France did not. Russia and China did not publicly criticize the American intervention but started to take seriously into consideration the idea that "indispensable nation" was not a new diplomatic term for defining the US foreign policy, but the new name of a common strategy aiming at global hegemony that was adopted and promoted by all US administrations – republican and democrat - since the end of the Cold War.

In Russia, not only the political and military elites and the government but also the Russian people started to reconsider their opinions about the intentions of the West in general and United States in particular. They regarded as very unfair the Western role during the Yeltsin era, one of the most tragic period in the modern history of Russian people, and they deeply resented the non or less-respectful manner in which various Western politicians, businessmen and organizations were treating Russia since the disintegration of Soviet Union. As a result, if in 1992, 22% of the Russians believed that the United States is an enemy of Russia, in 2017 68%¹⁴ believed that this is the case. And Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer, has had a nearly 80% popularity in accordance with the Western pools, and was elected for the fourth time as president of Russia with about 75% of the votes in the last presidential election.

In parallel, China had uninterruptedly continued its accelerated economic development becoming the second economic

superpower of the world and has accumulated the necessary economic and technological strength for becoming a military superpower comparable with the United States and Russia. During the 2008-2009 economic crisis, it did not use its economic power for aggravating the crisis, but to some extent cooperated with America in order to moderate and control it.

The Chinese reasons were twofold. China was not interested to destroy its most important client and debtor and it was not sufficiently powerful to risk an open conflict with America. Subsequently, it was waiting to accumulate more economic power at home, while it was accelerating its economic expansion around the world, and its military and naval expansion in its neighborhoods.

In the end, observing the dynamics of the international system during the last twenty-eight years, one can observe that it has changed from a unipolar system having the United States as its main power in the aftermath of the disintegration of Soviet Union into a multipolar, balance of power system comparable to that of the nineteenth century. During this interval of time the United States aspired to achieve global hegemony, but its success was only partial and limited in time. And the last diplomatic name of this aspiration was “indispensable nation.”

NOTES:

¹ President William J. Clinton, Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1997

² Madeleine Albright, NBC's *Today Show*, February 19, 1998

³ George W. Bush, Address Before the Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit, September 11, 1990

⁴ Charles Krauthammer, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1, Winter 1990-1991, America and the World issue, pp. 22-33

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ The White House: A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, July 1994

⁷ Micah Zenko, „The Myth of the Indispensable Nation,” <http://foreignpolicy.com:/2014/11/06>

⁸ Doru Tsaganea, „Hegemony: Freely Accepted Leadership or Domination,” in *Non-polarity and International Tension*, Addleton Academic Publishers, New York, 2014, p. 61

⁹ W. Raymond Duncan, Barbara Jancar-Webster, and Bob Switky, *World Politics in the 21st Century*. New York: Longman, New York, 2002, p. 658.

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 2001, p. 40.

¹¹ The White House, America First National Security Strategy, December 2017

¹² Vladimir Putin, Interview for the documentary “The World Order 2018,” *Russia Today TV*, March 7, 2018

¹³ Jean-Marie Colombani, „We Are All Americans”, in *Le Monde*, Paris, France, Sept. 12, 2001.

¹⁴ Fareed Zakaria, GPS, CNN, March 18, 2018

Brecht's "Use Value" and Aristotle's "Artistic Proofs"

When I met for the first time Karolos Koun,¹ we both tried to introduce each other by presenting our views on, for us both, common professional subjects. I remember, that Koun listened to my re-reading (I called it "decoding") of Brecht, using the experiences I just had with the first Cypriot Brecht production ever, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*,² and that he described his experiments with popular roots in Ancient Greek theatre traditions. It was then, when I started to explain the functional, the "use value" of Brechtian theatre tools to underline, that the aesthetic of the THOK production was not the result of a style, but the challenge of traditional local view habits. As Koun was not familiar with the term "use value" (Gebrauchswert), because very few non-dramatic texts of Brecht had been translated into Greek, and an ideological simplification of Brecht's terminology ("epic theatre", "alienation") had a more confusing than theatricality enabling effect, he immediately looked for a connectability to Aristotle. He started to give me a lecture about Logos, Pathos, Ethos, which he called "artistic proofs", a term I found very expressive and precise. Koun, the master of Ancient Greek comedy, laid bare a sociology of character, which was not only relatable to Brecht's model, but covered basics of theatre making. We agreed that a speech act performed on stage is not predicated on the actor that performs it but is attributed to a character in a (fictional) world. I could not more agree, that as the whole, this fictional world should be seen as a rhetoric attempt to shatter the rooted values of the contemporary audience. At that first meeting a few days before Christmas 1975, with Koun in his small office at his Art Theater in Athens we

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contemplated about the ability of the director to look out for means of persuasion in a given situation, making rhetoric applicable in all fields, not just politics.

In Ancient Greece, the earliest mention of oratorical skill occurs in Homer's *Iliad*, where heroes like Achilles, Hektor, and Odysseus were honored for their ability to advise and exhort their peers and followers (the *laos* or army) in wise and appropriate action. With the rise of the democratic polis speaking skill was adapted to the needs of the public and political life of cities in Ancient Greece, much of which revolved around the use of oratory as the medium through which political and judicial decisions were made, and through which philosophical ideas were developed and disseminated. Facility with language was referred to as *logon technē* "skill with arguments" or "verbal artistry". Throughout European history, rhetoric has concerned itself with persuasion in public and political settings such as assemblies and courts. Because of its associations with democratic institutions, rhetoric is commonly said to flourish in open and democratic societies with rights of free speech, free assembly, and political enfranchisement for some portion of the population. Those who classify rhetoric as a civic art believe that rhetoric has the power to shape communities, form the character of citizens and greatly impact civic life. Rhetoric was viewed as a civic art by several of the Ancient philosophers. Aristotle and Isocrates were two of the first to see rhetoric in this light. In his work, *Antidosis*, Isocrates states, "we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is not institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish".³ With this statement he argues that rhetoric is a fundamental part of civic life in every society and that it has been necessary in the foundation of all aspects of society. He further argues that rhetoric, although it cannot be taught to just anyone, is capable of shaping the character of man. He writes, "I do think that the study of political discourse can help more than any other thing to stimulate and form such qualities of character".⁴

Aristotle, writing several years after Isocrates, supported many of his arguments for rhetoric as a civic art. According to Aristotle, our perception of a speaker or writer's character influences how believable or convincing we find what that person has to say.

This projected character is called the speaker's or writer's ethos. We are naturally more likely to be persuaded by a person who, we think, has personal warmth, consideration of others, a good mind and solid learning. Often, we know something of the character of speakers and writers ahead of time. They come with a reputation or extrinsic ethos. People whose education, experience, and previous performances qualify them to speak on a certain issue earn the special extrinsic ethos. Their "character" creates the authority. But whether or not we know anything about the speaker or writer ahead of time, the actual text we hear or read, the way it is written or spoken and what it says, always conveys an impression of the author's character. This impression created by the text itself is the intrinsic ethos. Representatives of the modern history of democracy are determined by such structures and attitudes.

"We remember with malice toward none" and "we having nothing to fear" and "tear down this wall" because the words embodied the essential Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Reagan, respectively. Obama's Nobel speech cannot be summed up in a similarly pithy quotation. Taken all in all, though, it is likely to endure because it is the testament of a man whose tragic view on the world is deeply and authentically held. Obama may well become the first US-president since Lincoln to lead his nation in a running meditation on the ways and means of fate.

In the founding text of Western ethical philosophy, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines ethics as the formation of good character through the practice of moral virtue, where moral virtue is thought not to come naturally but to require cultivation, training and repetition, like learning to play a musical instrument. Eventually the practice of virtue becomes second nature, becomes habit: "moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (ethos), and has indeed derived its name... from that word".⁵

Significantly, Aristotle rejects Plato's "idea of good" as the basis of ethics, instead orienting the practice of virtue towards the attainment of happiness.⁶

In the Christian era, ethics loses its focus on the self and its happiness and becomes a matter of self-renunciation and submission to external law.⁷

The emphasis shifts from character and habit to decision and act. Good conduct becomes a question of choice, where at every turn

the fate of the eternal soul hangs in the balance “Christian ethics is a drama of autonomous decision- making, a theme that dovetails neatly into modern pragmatic liberalism.”⁸ Hence Kant’s categorical imperative, which seeks to ground Christian submission to the law on the more universal and incontrovertible ‘foundation of Reason itself: “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”⁹ For the Athenian audience, historicizing their own mythological past was a means of re-evaluating its “use value” for their actual needs as a community. Re-writing pre-historic stories leads directly to the dynamic social exchange of the drama onstage and the drama of life outside the *theatron*, the “seeing place”. The temporal exigencies of a dramatic performance are ad *hoc* playgrounds, engaging questions of moral, political, and religious authority, where each and every moment of the performance is significant and yet unrecoverable. The dramaturgy is always strictly the same: a known series of incidents that precipitates a crisis and brings the meaning of the protagonist’s actions into focus and has to be judged for the polis’s policymaking. Aristotle, we know, called this crisis the *peripeteia*, or reversal, and argued that it should be accompanied by an act of *anagnorisis*, or recognition, in which the character responds to the change.

As contemporary readers of Greek tragedy, we may feel that we face different truths than did the Greek audiences twenty-five hundred years ago. How, then, do we create meaning from these plays? How do we reconcile the tensions which exist between the fictional images of life the Greeks presented and the ongoing reality of our own lives? One way to begin is to identify particular areas in which the view of life implied in Greek tragedy differs from our own. The discovery that it is possible to look at life through entirely new eyes is in itself a kind of meaning which drama has to offer.¹⁰ This was made possible in Ancient Greek dramaturgy by the conjunction of two ingenious devices: imprinting of images on matter and mediation of language.

The imprinting of images on matter created a specific kind of iconic signifier, coupling image and matter, which is perceptible and thus communicable. The mediation of language enabled both control over iconic signifiers and formalization of imagistic syntax- thus

lending a high degree of articulation that is clearly discerned in the imagistic/iconic performing arts.

The goal of scripted Pathos and staged Ethos is to persuade the audience that the presented ideas are valid, or more valid than someone else's. Aristotle's categories of pathos, ethos and logos were in Ancient times and are still today basic categories of social communication and depend on the interests they serve. Over the past century, people studying rhetoric have tended to enlarge its object domain beyond speech texts. A wider interpretation of rhetoric as identification broadened the scope from strategic and overt political persuasion to the more implicit tactics of identification found in an immense range of sources. Here a few examples of different aspects:

- "The personality of the orator outweighs the issues" (John Leopold).
- "I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV" (1960s TV commercial for Excedrin).
- "If Aristotle's study of pathos is a psychology of emotion, then his treatment of ethos amounts to a sociology of character. It is not simply a how-to guide to establishing one's credibility with an audience, but rather it is a careful study of what Athenians consider to be the qualities of a trustworthy individual" (James Herrick).¹¹
- "If, in my low moments, in word, deed or attitude, through some error of temper, taste, or tone, I have caused anyone discomfort, created pain, or revived someone's fears, that was not my truest self. If there were occasions when my grape turned into a raisin or my joy bell lost its resonance, please forgive me. Charge it to my head and not to my heart. My head-so limited in its finitude: my heart, which is boundless in its love for the human family. I am not a perfect servant. I am a public servant doing my best against the odds" (Jesse Jackson, Democratic National Convention Keynote Address, 1984).¹²

The quotations illustrate, what Koun and I called in our conversation "producing iconic replicas of verbal and nonverbal acts", when we compared the rhetoric of Brecht's Azdak with Ancient Athens' Pericles. Both' rhetorical persuasion wants to make possible the kind of knowledge that might lead not to catharsis but to

interventionist critique. And something else I remember from our discussion. We saw structural similarities in the Ancient Greek's and in Brecht's drama: their investigative nature allows to know on behalf of, and in excess of the character's own social and psychological specificity. Instead of simply indexing "objective reality" in an attempt to uncover the real as something independent of social and political subjectivity, theatre making has developed from its very beginning an approach that dialogically structures reality into representation, invites a disrobing gaze, encourages understanding, and even implies the possibility of intervention. The question was and is always: how to re-read the given texts for a changing history.

The reality is the model for the theatre making. The rise and presence of Barack Hussein Obama in US politics is such an example.

It was the Narrative - Obama's life and telling of it - that produced the Obama presidency. Many if not most of the key moments were speeches: Chicago in 2002, Boston in 2004, Philadelphia and Denver in 2008. The crafting of this story was always a joint Obama-Axelrod enterprise. At the president's address to the nation (in front of both Houses) both "authors" unveiled a new chapter in the saga. The story telling goes like this: Our hero has been attacked by all the evil creatures in Washington and vows to tame them, either by his charm or with his bare hands. He promises to create jobs, cut the deficit, cut more taxes (but raise them on the rich), and finally redeem this promise to end the corrupt, insipid, and selfish ways of the capital.

In the House chamber, and on TV, it worked. Obama was forceful and shrewd, amiable and reasonable. He commanded the room (except for the stone-faced members of the Supreme Court) with ease. Judging from the instant polls that night, the public loved it. As a piece of political stagecraft, it impressed. But in the cold light of day, people do have a "but" - in fact more than one.

The address sometimes seemed more about Obama himself than about the country. At times it was not so much his thought on the state of the Union as it was his thoughts on the state of the presidency, and on our (the spectator's) view on him. "Now, I am not naive", the president said. "I never thought that the mere fact of my election would usher in peace, harmony, and some post-partisan era."¹³ And later. "I have never suggested that change would be easy, or that I can do it alone." Then, in the closing flourish: "I don't quit." A

comedian's comment: You'd better not, you have a four-year contract!

In the post-Oprah age, Americans not only accept but also even demand this kind of intimate, almost confessional style in political leaders and public figures. Most Americans like Obama as a person, and most want him to succeed as a president. But he has to remember that he's supposed to be a character in our story - not the other way around.

Unlike his perfectly paced memoirs, Obama's presidency is not a narrative whose plot he can dictate, or even control. It's not a Euripides tragedy or a James Cameron movie or a bildungsroman. It is an accretion of actions, decisions, and confrontations - some of them unexpected and unwelcome - in the real world. Reality, especially the bureaucratic and governmental one, resists the smooth-flowing hero story, and it is annoyingly prosaic. At this point even Obama's supporters no longer yearn for a superhero. As one critique wrote after the address: "The country will settle for a competent administration, and it isn't clear that this is one".¹⁴

The Tragic Hero of Ancient Greek drama is not an ideal but a warning, and the warning is addressed not to an aristocratic audience, i.e. other potentially heroic individuals, but to the demos, i.e. the collective chorus.

The conflict in Greek tragedy reveals forces to which both mortals and gods are subject. Recognition in Greek tragedy takes place at human and cosmic levels. At the human level, one character discovers the true identity of another. Recognition at the cosmic level is tied in with the final resolution of the conflict between human striving and the forces of denial. The Greeks believed in a universal principle which reconciled the forces of creation and destruction. They called it Moira, translated variously as Fate, or Necessity. To the modern mind, Necessity is an unfamiliar idea. We believe, instead, in progress - the idea that we can assert ourselves unconditionally and that, some day in the future, we will triumph once and for all over the forces of denial. The fascination in reading Greek tragedy, however, is in reading it as if we believed that our being cannot be asserted unconditionally, and that we occupy a small place in an immense universe in which all things, even the immortal gods, are subject to the one force, Necessity. It is the recognition of

Necessity, in one form or another, that finally resolves the conflict in Greek tragedy.

Through witnessing the fall of the tragic hero from happiness to misery, the chorus learns that the Homeric hero is not the ideal man they should try to imitate or admire. On the contrary, the strong man is tempted by his strength into becoming the impious man whom the gods punish, for the gods are not gods because they are ideally strong but because they are ideally just. Their strength is only the instrument by which they enforce their justice.

The ideal man whom every member of the democracy should try to become is not the aristocratic heroic individual but the moderate law-abiding citizen who does not want to be stronger and more glorious than everybody else.

Anthony Trollope once argued that tragedy was embodied in a blind giant, a creature haunted by the memory of his former power.¹⁵

In the 1930's, Reinhold Niebuhr said, "The history of mankind is a perennial tragedy; for the highest ideals which the individual may project are ideals which he can never realize in social and collective terms."¹⁶

It is this last insight that informs Obama's thinking: tragedy as the acceptance of the fact that the world will never fully confirm our wishes, and that even the noblest human efforts will fall short of our highest aspirations. "We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth that we will not eradicate violence in our lifetimes," Obama said in Oslo. "there will be times when nations - acting individually or in concert - will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified... I face the world as it is and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world... To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism - it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason."¹⁷ Politicians tend not to speak this way. It is more fun to inspire than to warn. By focusing on antagonistic contradictions, the speaker's rhetoric determines what constitutes truth, and therefore, what is beyond question and debate. The deliberation and decision making is - as in the theatre - audience centered. Obviously, the logos alienates the pathos and ethos of the prize acceptance ceremony. The characters of Ancient Greek plays

are all about warning and the limits of reason. The observations of their actions rely on the spectator's reasonable judgement.

Our first view of Oedipus the King is of a man in the public eye, a beloved king who is sought by his people. The matching of the large group against the single figure provides the scenic background for the developing interplay between the public and the private domain. This visual relationship between the 'solitary' standing figure and the prostrate assembly is immediately reinforced in a particular and striking way: "Children..." This, the first word of the tragedy, Oedipus addresses to young and old alike. On the other hand, it is a natural expression of the role which the presence of the suppliants confers upon him. He is the leader, the protector, the patriarch. On the other hand, there is the real father, the polluted one, who at the last is compelled to relinquish the daughters born of his own incest. The image of the father is the instant link between the external political circumstance and the lurking family horror. Oedipus' relationship with his children" begins and ends the drama.

Ancient Greek characters undertake extreme, audacious objectives and pursue them relentlessly, to the point of catastrophe. Their actions help the community to face its fear of the implacable power of Necessity and inspire pity for the suffering which they must undergo in the process. If we empathize with the protagonist, we can vicariously test our own powers of truth-facing and survival. But aside from the ongoing speculations about reversal and recognition and the functioning of catharsis or the impact the emotional pressures of the tragic actions may have on the audience, it is almost certain, that the most provoking theatrical invention, which replaced the earlier choral dancing and revelry and is known from Aristophanes' plays, was the parabasis, the choral ode that was delivered to the audience and addressed political issues. The need to replace older viewing habits through "thinking capable of intervention" is thus not an invention of the twentieth-century theatre revolution: it was already a basic element in the development of the social function of the theatre in Ancient Greece.

Modern readers are sometimes tempted to skip choral passages, but to the Greek audience the odes were a crucial part of the play. The chorus represents the community's Elders, who, in the fictional theatre world, are deeply concerned with the fate of their

city. They also perform the priestly function of speaking for and to the gods in the real world of the audience. Aristophanes expressed the Greek perception of the chorus when he wrote:

There is no function more noble than that of the god-touched Chorus Teaching the City in Song.

This tradition of spiritual teaching in Greek tragedy is centered in the choral odes. The chorus is partly encircled by the audience to provide maximum contact in those moments when the drama "speaks the truth for the improvement of the city." Stagecraft and tragic conception of Ancient Greek drama are always united by the idea of vision. The exploitation of children for example to evoke pathos is supposed to be Euripidean. Yet in two of seven plays, the *Ajax* and *Oedipus the King*, Sophocles employs just such an effect. And this is not to mention the heart-rending separation and reunion of the two daughters in the *Oedipus at Colonus*. Enormity confronts innocence, terrible knowledge silent incomprehension. And how important is this scene in *Oedipus the King*; it comes last and it is that against which the beginning is measured. From success to ruin, from authority to impotence, from kingship to beggary, the reversal worked out by the whole play is very much a visual demonstration. Moreover, the scene of final pathos is but the climax of a long display of horror and suffering. The emergence of Oedipus, stumbling and self-mutilated, introduces a sight which is with us until the end of the play, no shorter "a spectacle of horror" than the sight of Pentheus' impaled head in the *Bacchae* of Euripides.

Remember the display of Oedipus' suffering comes to its climax with the arrival of his two daughters. He has begged Creon to be allowed to touch and hold them. Already he is contradicting the whole purpose of the self-mutilation: his hands are to be his eyes (1469-70). The generosity of Creon is immediately substantiated, an unquestioned thing. Oedipus hears their sobs, he gropes for them, and they come and cling to their father: "O children." With this repeated echo of the opening spectacle the reversal is brought home with crushing power, the tableaux of exaltation set against the tableaux of ruin. As the crowd was silent so now are the daughters. Here, at last, is the real father with the real children. He stoops down, bringing his bloody sockets level with his children's gaze:

"Come here, come to these hands of mine, hands of your brother, hands of your father, which made these once bright eyes to

see in this way - his, who neither seeing nor knowing was seen (ephanten) to become your father by her from whom he himself was born. For you also I weep since I have no power to see you, when I think of the bitter life in the future.” (1480-7)

The whole visual meaning of his fate is condensed into this, the final formulation of the play's controlling imagery. Still there is the seeing and the being seen. After showing himself to Thebes he shows himself to the silence of the children and horror turns to pity. The hands which so tenderly hold them are the hands which are imbued with the blind and the knowing abominations which he has done to himself. But, above all, they are the hands that “see”: he “feels” the horror he has created and again in his blindness he speaks of “seeing”, which at this point is not the fulfilment of his first anguished purpose, the physical assault, but a new kind of inner vision.

From a theatre making point of view the visual imagery is simply one feature of the whole pattern of “reflexion” which is built into Oedipus manner of speaking. One has to draw attention to the character's often emphatic mention of “hands” in the prologue and throughout the play. For the hand that will average the murder (107) is the same as the hand of the murderer, the hand which will in fact be used against himself in the self-mutilation. Cf. 139-40, 231, 266, 810-11, 821-2, 996, 1329-35, 1481-3. And perhaps, as Gould¹⁸ suggests, there are gestures of the hand to accompany the verbal reference. But whatever form of theatrical narration is used, pathos and ethos appear always as a unit: verbal and non-verbal.

Lee Breuer says it best: “The writing down of words and music creates only a body. Performance brings to life the soul.”¹⁹ The soul is the territory for the “artistic proof of any theatre making. The Ancient Greeks used the same word for “alive” as for “ensouled”. Soul and aliveness were synonymous, both are conceptually linked in spiritual thinking.

The Gospel at Colonus (1983) is an oratorio set in a black Pentecostal service, in which Greek myth replaces Bible story. It is sung, acted and preached by the characters of the “play” - Preacher, Pastor, Evangelist - who take the roles of the oratorio - Oedipus, Theseus, Antigone. The preaching addresses the audience directly in rhetorical styles ranging from the intimate to the musically “tuned”

chant. Choir serves as onstage congregation and responds throughout. Organ underscores sermon and scene.

Breuer, the author, describes the work as follows: "As was the classic Greek performance, the Pentecostal service is a communal catharsis which forges religious, cultural and political bonds. Should not the living experience teach us something of the historical one?... Music is our ministry. The living heritage of Africa's oral culture, informing Christianity, is the power of the Pentecostal service. 'Music' means preaching and responding and moving and testifying as well as the playing of instruments and the singing of, songs. Would not the oral culture of the Homeric age have similarly informed the theatre of Sophocles?"²⁰

The Rev. Earl F. Miller, who performed the role of Pastor Theseus in the Broadway production, describes in a lecture, delivered at the Yale School of Drama in 1986, the specific way of storytelling in this production: "In black preaching the preacher has to get outside of himself, or in church language, let the spirit take control. In order for the people to judge the preacher's call to the ministry authentic, at some point in the sermon he has to lose his cool because he isn't supposed to be in charge anyway. Black preaching is body and soul. Black preaching like religion is holistic. It engages the whole person. One of the clear things we can say is that the black religious experience is not just a meeting of the minds. It is an encounter with the living God. When we first started serving God, we didn't serve him with our words, we didn't serve him with our ideas, we danced him. We praised him with our whole being."²¹

Lee Breuer's lyrics and Bob Telson's music translated the spirit of the original into the spirit of a different language and context. Their work uses the idea of reimagining in a striking and original way. Remembering the Five Blind Boys of Alabama, to mention only one of the musical groups, it is obvious what in practical terms scripted pathos and staged ethos can mean for the present theatre making.

As in my talk with Koun nearly 45 years ago the question is always how to find a storytelling which has "use value" for the present. In our discussion about Azdak and Pericles we considered very practical that there is no important action that is separated from the words; "the poetry is the action." The action is a necessary unity of speech and movement: "acted speech"; and where there are minor

actions that are separate these again are prescribed by the form as a whole, which is fully realized in the words, written for known performance conditions.

The purpose of a basic attitude like this is Koun and I agreed:

- to make the spectator a critical observer who like the protagonist on stage must make decisions (to modify or control instinct and will).
- to explore the social determination of the individual, showing the historical nature of human misfortune, the changeable order of nature, and the tragic hero's role (warning) for the demos (collective chorus)
- to find out why self-examination was vital for the Ancient Greek ideals, and why unexamined life revealed the need for order, proportion and restraint.
- to focus on the process, not the outcome of the events.

And that is Brechtian as well as it is Aristotelian!

NOTES:

¹ Karolos Koun (1908 - 1987), founded in 1942 the experimental *Art Theater* in Athens. Famous for his stagings of Ancient Greek drama, especially the comedies of Aristophanes. Introduced to Greek audience avant-garde European playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht, Luigi Pirandello, Jean Genet, F. Lorca and Eugene Ionesco.

² *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht, Prologue adapted by Christakis Georghiou, Music: George Kotsonis, Cypriot premiere 4. October 1975, directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus.

³ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Harris Rackham, Wordsworth Editions, Ware, 1996, p. 84; also see Aristotle, „Poetics”, in *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, ed. and trans. S. H. Butcher, Dover, New York, 1951; --- *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. H. C. Lawson-Tancred, Penguin Books, London, 1991; Isocrates, “Against the Sophists”, in George Norlin, *Isocrates with an English Translation in three volumes*, William Heinemann, London, 1980.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-14.

⁷ Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self", in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, Vol. 1, ed. Paul Rabinow, New Press, New York, 2006, pp. 223-252.

⁸ Russel Smith, *Beckett and Ethics*, Continuum, London, 2008, p. 103.

⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Lewis White Beck, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1949.

¹⁰ Heinz-Uwe Haus, *Re-Reading of Ancient Greek Theatre Texts*, Cyclos, Nicosia, 2005.

¹¹ James Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 2001, p. 76.

¹² Jesse Jackson, *Democratic National Convention Keynote Address*, 1984, quoted in *DDS Political / Dramaturgical Sources*, Droushia, 1987, p. 26.

¹³ Remarks of President Barack Obama - As Prepared for Delivery. Address to Joint Session of Congress, 24 February 2010; <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

¹⁴ Howard Fineman, in *The New Yorker*, January 18, 2010, p. 20.

¹⁵ Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), English novelist of the Victorian era, critiques generally acknowledge the sweeping satire *The Way We Live Now* (1875) as his masterpiece. In all, Trollope wrote forty-seven novels, as well as dozens of short stories.

¹⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), German-American theologian and commentator on public affairs. He attacked utopianism as useless for dealing with reality, writing in *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (Scribner's, New York, 1944): "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary". - His influence has been acknowledged by such recent leaders of American policy as Jimmy Carter, Madeleine Albright, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, as well as John McCain.

¹⁷ Full text of Obama's Nobel Peace Prize speech, 10. December 2009 - White House-msnbc.com.

¹⁸ *Oedipus the King*, ed. T. Gould, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1970.

¹⁹ Lee Breuer, *The Gospel at Colonus*, Theatre Communications Group, New York, p. xv.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ Earl F. Miller, in Lee Breuer, *The Gospel at Colonus*, pp. XIII-XIV.

The Balkan Romanians – Descendants and Representatives of Eastern Romanity

Introduction

Representatives of Balkan Romanianism – the Aromanians (*ar/u/mâni*, *rumăni/rămăni*, as they call themselves; and *vlahi*, *belivlasi*, *rëmëri*, *êobani*, *cuțovlahi*, *țințari*, as they are called by the Balkan nations among whom they live), and the Megleno-Romanians (*vlași*, as they call themselves; and *vlași* or *megleniți*, as they are called by the neighbouring populations) constitute the Southern branch of the Eastern Romanian ethnic group, which stretched from the North of Trajan's Dacia (until the arrival of migratory nations) to the mountainous Northern Greece, from the Black Sea to the Adriatic Sea. Its unit, resulting from the Romanization of the Thracians since the second century BC, was broken once the Slavs had settled to the South of Danube in the seventh century and, thus, the Romanian people developed further in the North of the Balkan Mountains – through its North-Balkan component (the Dacian-Romanians); and in South through its South-Balkan branch (the Aromanians and the Meglenoromanians). The representatives of the last ones were gradually pushed into the South of the Peninsula (where they may have encountered, South of the line of Jireček, some Romanized islets) (the Istro-Romanians are the late successors of the Dacian-Romanians).¹

The Dacian-Romanians continuously developed and were enriched, representing the basis for the formation of the Romanian literary language in the nineteenth century, while the Macedo-

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Romanian idiom maintained itself as a dialect of the common language trunk, the successor to Eastern Romanian.

Moreover, after the inclusion of the Balkans in the Ottoman Empire (in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), the Vlachs continued their existence, practicing especially the shepherding of flocks, their main activity (together with the transport of goods by caravan and trade) in Modern Times, until the First World War.²

After 1860³, from among the Aromanians, who having settled in the country and integrated into the social and economic life of Romanian society, as merchants, land owners, bailiffs, (some of them were even elected to Parliament) – there emerged personalities who vigorously pleaded for institutional organization that would assist their co-ethnics from the Balkans Peninsula in the process of developing national consciousness. Representatives of Romanian public life, political leaders, and men of culture, adhered to this initiative. Consequently, in 1864, the first Romanian school opened in Macedonia, through the efforts of a self-taught Aromanian tailor, Dimitrie Athanasescu. From the Pindus Mountains, Aromanian youth were sent to Bucharest by Father Averchie for training. Later, they opened several Romanian schools in the Vlach communities in the Balkans. Their number dramatically increased after 1878, when, through an official act, the Ottoman authorities chartered Romanian schools, and guaranteed Aromanians unhindered performance of religious service in “their own language.” About the same time, Romanian society became growingly aware of the existence of their consanguine in European Turkey, in particular, “the Romanians in Macedonia,” or “the Macedo-Romanians.” Articles and books began to be published, and the necessity for ever larger funds to be allotted to the above-mentioned schools was ever more frequently invoked in the Romanian Parliament.

The founding of the *Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society* in Bucharest, in September 23, 1879 stimulated the efforts for a national, cultural movement, which projected itself against the cognizance of common ethnic and linguistic roots between the modern descendents of Eastern Romanity, in which the Balkans branch clearly and coherently distinguished itself from the North Danubian one.

Miron Costin was the first Romanian humanist who relates about “Koutzovlachs”

At the moment of the rejuvenation of the medieval Romanian culture by the contribution of the humanists, who were connected to the most advanced spiritual ideas of the times – we also come across the first written mention of the existence of the South-Danube Romanians,⁴ a reality acknowledged as such in the writings of Miron Costin (1633-1691) – being the first Romanian scholar introducing this equation of our ethnicity and its Balkan component: “a completely new relation, unprecedented up to that moment in the Romanian culture, hence worthy of being remembered, is the teaching of the Moldavian scholar that also the Aromanians, being called Koutzovlachs by the Greeks, have Roman origins.”⁵ This “new relation” shows, in fact, for the first time in our historiography, the idea of the unity of the Romanian people from all its historical provinces, including its Southern branch – the Aromanians.

First, their mentioning appears in a paper in 1677, written in Polish – *Cronica țărilor Moldovei și Munteniei (Cronica polonă)* [The Chronicles of the Countries Moldavia and Wallachia (the so-called Polish Chronicle)]. Being a historical summary destined to inform foreigners (Polish), the Moldavian humanist scholar finds appropriate the augmentation of the value of information, “highlighting the particular aspects unknown to the Polish.”⁶ That is why, when talking about the origins and spread of the Roman descendants, he also provides the following information:

În Macedonia este de asemenea o colonie romană, cu aceeași limbă cu noi dar cu mult mai apropiată de limba italiană decât vorbirea noastră. Grecii îi numesc cuțovlahi, adică vlahi șchiopi, pentru că șchiopii și bolnavii din oastea romană rămâneau acolo. Este acolo un ținut mare care se numește Romania și acel ținut este o colonie romană.

[“In Macedonia there is also a Roman colony, with the same language as ours but a lot closer to Italian than our speech. The Greeks call them Koutzovlachs, meaning lame Vlachs, because the lame and the sick of the Roman army would remain there. There is also a wide land that is called Romania and this land is a Roman colony”.]⁷

This is documentary information of real value, beyond the explanation of the ethnonym Koutzovlach, which maintains also its historical primacy and its interpretative significance over the understanding, in those times, of the unity of language and of kin of the Romanian people. A few years later, after 1684, is designed “the first critical and scholarly presentation of cultural humanist literature regarding the Roman origin of Romanians with the corrective and decisive influence of the native conscience of the Romanity and unity of the people” – *De neamul Moldovenilor* [On the Kin of the Moldavians].⁸ In presenting the extent and the civilizing character of the Roman Empire, Miron Costin appeals to the Southern descendants of the Eastern Romanity, perfectly aware of their Roman origins, although less clear on the historical evolution of this Romanity: *Și la Rumele, în țările grecești, un neam ce le zicem coțovlah, colonia Râmului ieste* [“And in Rumelia, in the Greek lands, a kin which we call Koutzovlachs, is the colony of Rome”].⁹

Also in Romanian Country/Wallachia the time’s scholars had knowledge, at this end of the 17th century, regarding the spread of the Eastern Romanity.

The humanist scholar the High Steward/Seneschal Constantin Cantacuzino (1640-1716) was in direct contact with “Koutzovlachs” and their language: “Vlahos [Vlachos], meaning Romanian; and the place where they live they call it [Great] Vlahia”

The noble scholar, whose “cultural superiority is recognized by foreigners able of comparing him to other cultural environments,”¹⁰ is integrated rather to humanist historians than to the chroniclers. Unlike the latter, his informational horizon, his profound humanistic training provide his perfect knowledge of the age’s literature, based on which he scientifically proves the idea of the Romanity of his people and the unity of Romanians everywhere. Even more, written sources are supplemented by oral reports of the “old Romanians,” and also by discussions and news from other sources. We mean, in light of the present documentary approach, the information gathered from the often-called “Greeks” (who could, often, actually be Aromanians) in various sources of the times, which

the young scholar in Padua must have met during his two years of studies (1667-1669) – according to Nicolae Iorga¹¹, when stating that the founder of the college where the future High Steward/Seneschal studied was an “Elinovlah” [“Hellenovlach”] from the region of Veria – respectively, the erudite Ioan Kottunios (1572-1667). Also, it seems that the links of Constantin Cantacuzino with the Aromanians living in Bucharest had broadened his informational horizon regarding his knowledge on the Southern descendants of the Eastern Romanity.

Indeed, Constantine Cantacuzino clearly attests direct contact with the “Koutzovlachs”, which he considers to be the descendants of Rome, having the same language, “only more corrupted and mixed with this simple Greek and Turkish,”¹² with the North-Danubian Romanians:

Sunt dară acești coșovlahi, cum ne spun vecinii lor și încă și cu dintr-înșii am vorbit, oameni nu mai osebiți, nici în chip, nici în obcine, nici în tăria și făptura trupului, decât rumânii (our emphasis), ceștea, și limba lor rumânească ca acestora, numai mai stricăță și mai amestecată cu de ceastă proastă grecească și cu turcească, pentru că foarte puțini, cum s-au zis, au rămas la niște munți trăgându-se de lăcuiesc. Carii să tind în lung de lângă Ianina Ipirului până spre arbănași lângă Elbasan, în sate numai lăcuind, săvâi că și mari unele sate. Zic că sunt și oameni cu putere în hrana lor, de carii și mare minune, iaste, cum și până astăzi se află păzindu-și și limba, și niște obiceiie ale lor. Aceștea dară și limba ș-au mai stricat, și ei s-au împușinat, derept că și ei desăvârșit supt jugul turcescu cu acei greci dupre acolo s-au supus, unde și stăpânire, și blagorodnia, și tot ș-au pierdut. Și poate-fi că nice dintâi așa mulțime nu va fi fost de dânșii. Că iată acum și câți sunt, mojici și țărani sunt, și locurile lor cu greu de hrană fiind, pentru multa piatră și munți ce sunt de lăcuiescu, să împrastie și să duc mai mulți pen cele orașe mari turcești de să hrănescu; și pe acolo mai mulți amestecându-se, și limba, cum am zis, foarte ș-au stricat, și ei puțini au rămas. Zic și aceasta că de-i întreabă pre ei neștine: Ce ești? El zice: vlahos, adecâte rumân; și locurile lor unde lăcuiesc le zic Vlahia [cea mare].

Pare-mi-să, zic, că ei grăind, mai mult îi înțeleg ceștea rumâni decât ceștea grăind ceia să înțeleagă; însă și unii, și alții cu puținea vreme într-un loc aflându-se și vorbind adese, pe lesne pot înțelege. De crezut dară iaste că și acei coșovlahi, dintr-acești rumâni sunt și se trag; și într-acéle vremi ce Galian au alt împărat, au rădicat

o seamă dintr-înșii de aici și i-au dus de i-au așezat pe acolo, au rămas și până acum.

Coșovlahi le zic grecii, răsând-i și batjocură făcându-și de dânsii, adecâte, șchiopi, orbi, blestemați, hoți, și ca acéstea le zic că sunt. Și câți au fost de acel feliu pe undevași, i-au adunat de i-au dus pe acolo; precum și de ceștea rumâni duple aici rid și încă destule cuvinte grozave le zic și de nimic îi fac, și că din hoți să trag povestesc și băsnuiesc între ei. Ci de aceasta, căci grecii cești duple acum rid de rumâni și grăiesec așa de rău, au socoteală mare; pentru că văzând și ei pe toată alaltă lume răsând de dânsii și batjocorindu-i, au stătut și au obosit și ei pen gunoaiele lor, ca cocoșii, pârându-le că au mai rămas cevași vlagă și de ei (...)

[Hence these Koutzovlachs are, just like their neighbors tell us and even how the ones I have discussed with say, people not different, not in appearance, nor in «obcine» [habits], nor in the stamina and build of their bodies, than these Romanians (emphasis mine), and their Romanian language just like the others, is only more corrupted and mixed with simple Greek and Turkish, because very few, as it has been said, have remained living in the mountains. The ones stretching long from Ioannina in Epirus to the Albanians near Elbasan, only live in villages, although some villages are big. I say their craft is strong, making you wonder as they continue to exist even today, guarding their language and some of their customs. Even so, their language became more corrupted, and their numbers dwindled, as they too under the Turkish yoke have fallen, just like the Greeks there, where their rulers and their nobility and everything was lost. And it might be that they were not so many to begin with. As many as they are now, being mere simple folk and peasants, their places lacking food as they live in rocky mountain areas, they scatter and many go to big Turkish cities to get food; and in those places, their language mixes and becomes corrupt, as I have said, and they remain even fewer. I also tell you that if whoever asks them: What are you? He says: Vlahos [Vlachos], meaning Romanian; and the place where they live they call it [Great] Vlahia. In my opinion, the Romanians here understand them better if they hear them speak than the other way, but even so, if they would live together for a short time they could easily understand each other. Also you can believe that those Koutzovlachs are Romanians just like these and descend from them; and back during those times Gallienus or some other Emperor, has called some of them from here and placed them over there, where they remained until today.

The Greeks call them Koutzovlachs, mocking and laughing at them, meaning, lame, blind, cursed, thieves, this is how they call them. And they gathered the ones that were of their kin in that place; just like they laugh at these Romanians from here, and they even speak direly of them and call them nullities, saying and telling stories that they are descendants of thieves. Because of this, as these Greeks even now laugh at Romanians and speak so vile, they have a lot of influence. And also for seeing all the other people laughing at them and mocking them, they remained in lassitude in their rubble, just like roosters, seeming to them that they still have some vigor (...)].¹³

Hence, for Seneschal Cantacuzino the common origin of the Balkan Vlachs and the “Rumanians” is an acknowledged idea, placing them in the Epirus region and Southern Albania, the homeland during the Roman Emperors, where the scholar believes they live in few numbers – thanks to the imprecations of some megalomaniac and obsessively concerned Hellenes, as it is clearly understood from the anti-Greek texture of his narration (“But because those Greeks are suffering, believing others to cause their situation and not themselves, they blaspheme and talk awful about them, not looking at themselves”).¹⁴

The Moldavian Prince and scholar, the erudite Dimitrie Cantemir: “the Romanian population living today in all Epirus and around Ioannina, their speech itself being our witness, as they also speak Romanian”

Contemporary to this high-ranking dignitary from Wallachia is the Moldavian Prince *domnitor/voievod* [hospodar], and also most prominent representative of Romanian medieval humanism – Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), who also dealt extensively himself in some passages of his writings, with the history and existence of the descendants of the Eastern Romanity here. Being a renowned scholar in the European scientific world, beginning to resort – through him – to Romanian scholars in trying to find arguments and proofs of the Romanity of our people, the historical ideas of Dimitrie Cantemir highlight the unity of his kin, its origins and – unlike his predecessor, perhaps excluding Constantine Cantacuzino – Roman continuity in

Dacia, claiming that the Romanian people is descendant only of Romans, thus anticipating one of the main ideas of the “Transylvanian School.”¹⁵

His references to the Balkan Vlachs are found in the works he wrote in Russia. Hence, in the first Romanian scientific writing, which is *Description Moldaviae* (wrote in 1715-1716 at the urging of the Berlin Academy), in the third chapter, references are made regarding the idiom of the Balkan Vlachs in the following terms: “*A much more corrupted language has the Koutzovlachs, which live at the border of Macedonia* (emphasis mine). They surprisingly mix their language with Albanian and Greek. But, in any case, they keep the Moldavian ending in nouns and verbs. A such corrupted language they only understand between themselves, as no Greek, Albanian or Moldavian is capable of understanding them. If all these three were in the same place and they would hear the Koutzovlach talk, then for sure they could understand what he means, provided each would translate to the others the fragments in his language.”¹⁶

Henceforth, Dimitrie Cantemir also has knowledge about the same pejorative name attributed to Aromanians, and from his explicit manner of talking about certain characteristics of their language and its relations with Greek and Albanian – it is possible that he may have met and conversed with some of them. *The Description of Moldavia* being but a work that aims only at presenting one of the areas inhabited by Romanians, Cantemir has found it appropriate not to widely digress regarding the other branches of the Romanian kin.

Therefore it can easily be observed that the branches of the unitary body of the Romanian kin also include the Balkan Vlachs:

Astfel astăzi moldovenii, muntenii, valahii transalpini, mysienii, basarabenii și epiroții se numesc pe sine cu toții un nume cuprinzător nu «vlahi», ci «români», iar limbii lor neaoșe îi spun «limbă română»; iar dacă un moldovean, un muntean, un mysian ș.a.m.d. l-ar întreba pe un străin/sau venetic dacă știe limba lor, l-ar întreba așa: «Știi românește?, <adică> Scis romanice?»

[Therefore, today the Moldavians, Wallachians, Transalpine Vlachs, Mysians, Bessarabians and the Epirotes all extensively call themselves not «Vlachs» but «Romanians», and they call their own language «Romanian language». And if a Moldavian, a Wallachian, a Mysian and so on would ask a foreigner or newcomer if he knows

their language, they would ask this way: «Știi românește? /You know Romanian?/, <meaning> Scis romanice?»].¹⁷

Even more, between the Romanian provinces, Dimitrie Cantemir also enumerates the regions from the Balkan Peninsula, in the cases where he had knowledge of the existence of South-Danubian Romanians:

După mărturia experienței aflăm că întreg neamul romano-valah se găsește astăzi împrăștiat în șase ținuturi: în Moldova, Muntenia, Basarabia, Transilvania, Mysia și Epirul din Grecia (...). Mysia urmează malul Dunării de la Poarta de Fier și până la Pontul Euxin, <iar> în ea orașele, târgurile, satele sunt pline de români (our emphasis), amestecați cu turci /și/ cu sârbi; iar de-a latul, către miazăzi ea nu se întinde, în afară doar de hotarele Dobrogei, pe mai mult (sau mai puțin) de 20 de mile; căci Mysia dinlăuntru este ocupată astăzi în întregime, până în munții Haemus, de către turcii numiți «citak».

În Epir, în jurul Ianinei, lângă muntele Pind (Chalcocondylas, în Cartea a 6-a) locuiesc împrăștiați în sate și în târguri amestecați cu grecii. Ioan Cantacuzino împăratul îi întărește lui Constantin Anghelos (nepotului său de frate), cărmuirea acestor vlahi, dându-i și alte onoruri regești

[“By the testimony of experience we acknowledge that the entire Roman-Vlach kin is today found spread in 6 lands: in Moldavia, Wallachia, Bessarabia, Transylvania, Mysia and the Epirus of Greece (...). Mysia follows the flow of the Danube from the Iron Gate until the Black Sea, <and> in it the cities, towns, and the villages are full of Romanians (emphasis mine), mixed with Turks <and> with Serbs. It stretches wider to the South for more (or less) than 20 miles, except in the borders of Dobrudja. As today, inner Mysia is wholly occupied, until the Haemus Mons, by the Turks called «citak».

In Epirus, around Ioannina, near the Pindus Mountain (Chalcocondylas, in the 6th Book), they live scattered in villages and towns mixed with Greeks. The Emperor John Cantacuzino empowers Constantine Angelos (his brother’s son) with ruling these Vlachs, also bestowing him with other kingly honors”].¹⁸

Further – as in the last writing, already mentioned – in the last chapter (*Despre provinciile neamului românesc, în care /ei/ locuiesc astăzi* [On the Provinces of the Romanian Kin, in which /they/ Live

Today] of *Historia Moldo-Vlahica*, is almost literally repeated the fragment from the above mentioned work:

Ei au aceeași limbă cu ceilalți români, dar, datorită timpului îndelungat, <ea este> atât de stricată cu cea grecească și cu cea albaneză, încât moldovenii abia de le pot înțelege vorbele și graiul, mai ales că amestecă nu numai cuvinte, ci și întregi fraze grecești și albaneze, nu altfel decât suferă limba latină din partea polonilor, atât în scris, cât și în vorbire.

Aceștia sunt numiți îndeobște de către greci Κοιτζόβλαχοι (cuțo-vlahi), adică «valahi șchiopi», fie pentru că astăzi șchioapătă în limba lor, fie pentru că au fost numiți astfel de la un anume Claudus (Sic!), pre vremuri conducător al lor.

Dar ei își țin foarte strâns cununile, fără să-și dea fiicele după soți de alt neam și fără să ia pentru fiii lor soții străine și păzesc cu grijă obiceiurile cele de obște la români încă din vechi, precum și celelalte datini ale neamului. Cam 30 de mii de bărbați îi plătesc sultanului în fiecare an o dare, pe care o numesc «haraci», în afară de cei care țin munții în haiducie și nu arareori fac mare prăpăd asupra călătorilor turci

[“They have the same language as the other Romanians, but because of the long period of time <it is> so corrupted with Greek and Albanian, that the Moldavians can barely understand their words and speech, especially because they do not only mix words, but whole Greek and Albanian phrases, just like Latin is wholly corrupted by the Polish, in writing as well as in speech.

They are called, rather by the Greeks, Κοιτζόβλαχοι (Koutzo-Vlachs), meaning «lame Vlachs», either because today they falter in their language, or because they have been called so after a certain Claudus (Sic!), an old ruler of them (new information, as it can be observed, on the etymology of the ethnonym Koutzovlach – our note).

Their weddings are very strict, as they do not allow their daughters to marry a man of a different kin, and they do not take foreign spouses for their sons, and they carefully safeguard their old Romanian customs, as well as the other traditions of their kin. About 30 thousand men annually pay a tax to the Sultan, which they call «harach», except those that live like outlaws in the mountains and often wreak havoc upon Turkish travelers”-]¹⁹

The last two phrases extend the informational aspect which Dimitrie Cantemir places in the European scientific circuit, by

attesting some traditions and mentalities – widely reelevated by modern travelers – without which the Balkan Romanians could no longer maintain thier ethnic individuality amidst populations of other nations and other faiths.

An enlightened spirit, a patriot in the real meaning of the world, Cantemir considers that it is in the benefit of *niamului moldovenesc* [„the Moldavian kin”] the translation in the language of his fellow countrymen, of the work *Historia Moldo-Vlachica* – a much amplified translation of what will become *Hronicul vechimei a romano-moldo-vlahilor* [The Ancient Chronicle of the Roman-Moldavian-Wallachians] (1719-1722).²⁰ This masterpiece of “amazing” erudition for any scholar of the times summarizes the “cantemirian thesis” regarding the exclusively Roman origin of our people, the occurrence of its ethnogenesis solely in Dacia and the unity of the Capathian-Danubian space, also reinstating his assertion on the Koutzovlachs in the above mentioned works.

The posterity of Romanian chroniclers and humanists: the representatives of the Transylvanian School

One of the basic ideas of Dimitrie Cantemir – the Roman purity of the Romanian people – will be reinstated as a main idea in the program of the *Transylvanian School* at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. In the writing of the most prominent representatives of this valuable, circumscribed to the Enlightenment, intellectual movement of the Transylvanian Romanians can be found precious information regarding the South-Danubian Romanity.

Summarily, it’s about:²¹

- *Samuil Micu* (1745-1806) writes: “As whether someone would trade with the Dacoromanians or would travel through Wallachia, Moldavia, Transylvania, Maramureş, Hungary beyond the Tisza, Sylvania, Banat, *Cuŭo-Valahia* /Kuzo-Valachiam/ [*Koutzo-Wallachia*] (emphasis mine), Bessarabia, and even in Crimea, he would first need to know Daco-romanian before other idioms, as he will not hear a language more often used in the listed provinces”²²; also: “*there are Romanians that live in «Machedoniia»* [Macedonia]

(emphasis mine) and *they are called Vlachs* (emphasis mine), and because their lord, Hrisa, was a short man, some Greeks called them «condovlahi», meaning, short Romanians. Others call them «cuțovlahi» [Koutzovlachs], lame Romanians, because when they settled there, many remained lame after battling the Greeks.”²³

- the historian *Gheorghe Șincai* (1754-1816), in a letter addressed in 1804 to Engel (“my old friend”), the Austrian historian in scientific disputes with the Romanian scholars from Transylvania: “I plan to write the annals of the whole Romanian nation, hence also of the «cuțo-vlahilor sau țințarilor (cumu-i numesc) » [Koutzovlachs and the Tsintsars (as I name them)] (emphasis mine), which I did, starting from Trajan or better said, from the first war of Decebal against the Romans until 1660.”²⁴ Listing the various ethnonyms of the Romanian nation, “finally, the ones living on the other side of the Danube (from the Ancient Dacia) in a single name they are called «țințari» [Tsintsars], and by the Greeks «vlahi șchiopi» [Lame Wallachians²⁵].” We encounter, therefore, at Șincai too the (widely used in those times) term of *țințari* [„Tsintsars”²⁶], but used „later”²⁷ as he will also reveal in the *Hronică*.

- *Petru Maior* (1761-1821), another coryphaeus of the Transylvanian School, author of the famous *Istoria pentru începutul românilor în Dachia* [The History of the Beginning of the Romanians in Dacia] (published in Pesta in 1812) – work that constitutes a new methodological approach to the given historical theme, within which the past of the South-Danubian Romanians is also integrated (the whole work stopping at the 13th century). Respectively, in the short special chapters at the end of the book (Chapters *XII-XV*) but also in other parts of the book. These are the titles of the segments of the books reserved for them: “Chap. XII: *Întâmplările românilor celor dincolo de Dunăre, din zilele lui Aurelian până la descălecarea bulgarilor în Misia*; Chap. XIII: *Întâmplările românilor celor preste Dunăre, dela descălecarea bulgarilor în Misia până în zilele lui Isaachie Anghel, împăratul grecilor*; Chap. XIV: *Întâmplările românilor celor preste Dunăre, în zilele lui Isaachie Anghel, împăratul grecilor*; Chap. XV: *Statul românilor celor preste Dunăre, după Isaachie Anghel.*” [Chap. XII: *The events of the Romanians across the Danube, from the days of Aurelian to the arrival of the*

Bulgarians in Moesia; Chap. XIII: *The events of the Romanians across the Danube, from the arrival of the Bulgarians in Moesia to the days of Isaac Angelos, Emperor of the Greeks*; Chapter XIV: *The events of the Romanians across the Danube, during the days of Isaac Angelos, the Emperor of the Greeks*; Chap. XV: *The State of the Romanians across the Danube, after Isaac Angelos*].

He comments extensively about Balkan Vlachs according to Byzantine writers: “From what has been said above – *Petru Maior concludes* –, it is clearly seen that the name Koutzovlach is not an old name. And for no other reason has this name been given to the Romanians across the Danube by the present Greeks, but because that *in these latest times envy has come between the Greeks and those Romanians, especially between the traders* (emphasis mine), and many of the Greeks having learned the Romanian language of these Romanians here, in Wallachia, have noticed that it does not exactly match the language of the Romanians across the Danube, because – *knowingly explains Petru Maior, as a proof of his direct contact with the Aromanians* – a multitude of Greek words were borrowed by the Romanians across the Danube in their closeness with the Greeks. And because they found no other fault to mock them, they called them Koutzovlachs, i.e. *lame Romanians* (emphasis mine), meaning their language is not exactly the same with the Romanians this side of the Danube. That is why that name, Koutzovlachs, does not taint the origin of those Romanians, *clearly concludes Petru Maior*. Least their language had suffered that modification, *still their blood is purely Romanian and they are true Romans* (emphasis mine), whose ancestors, in the days of Galienus, crossed from this side of the Danube over, and then went as far as Thessaly. Graver is that even though they know themselves to be Romanians, still many are rather using Greek, instead of cultivating their Romanian language and cleaning it of Greek”²⁸ – behold how Petru Maior does not lose the opportunity of adding to his comment on the Byzantine text also his thoughts about the Balkan Romanians’ tendency of losing their nationality, urging them to cultivate their mother language and to “clean it of Greek.”

“Outpost of Romanianism”

Gradually, in the first half of the 19th century, the public opinion in the Romanian Principalities becomes familiarized with the historical past of the Balkan Vlachs, exclusively designated using the appellative “Romanians”; during the first years of the 1840’s, the press in Iași, Bucharest, Brașov, Blaj concedes and important attention to knowing their history, integrated on the whole to the Romanian nation: “Romanians, which by the different provinces they inhabit, are called Romanians, Moldavians or Daciens, meaning from Dacia,” are brethren of those which, “displaced in Moesia” by Emperor Aurelian, separated from their “Mother Fatherland,” have gone to the mountains of Macedonia “to look for a life matching their own habits: those of a herding and warring people”; it is about ‘these Romanians [which] animated by desire of independence have very much contributed to the rebirth of today’s Greece.’”²⁹

At the middle of the 19th century, within the action of “rediscovering” those Romanians “who were spreading like a cobweb at the right side of Danube”³⁰ – the pioneering belongs of the 1848-1849 and Unionist generations, that is, of exiled revolutionaries who meet in their pilgrimages within the area of European Turkey exponents of Balkan Romanity. A political vision of the future of Balkan Romanians is developed by Nicolae Bălcescu, who, in a letter from October 26, 1849, sent to Ion Ghica, has written: “I was decided, to come from Constantinople, to establish myself between Macedo-Romanians, because I believe *is necessary of developing the nationality in this outpost of the Romanianism* (our emphasis). If you could send a sane man there, to elaborate a report of their ethical and political condition, then we would be looking for a school, and we will give the possibility of working for so many young people who are starving. Your delegate should have a good relationship with the priests and the bishops and to (...) (lack of text in the letter – our note) to obtain funds for opening the school”³¹; in another letter from July 4, 1849, Nicolae Bălcescu had spoken at large about the spreading of “Romanian nation,” that has “the most beautiful future” of all the nations of Orient: “It is big, about 10 million, it is compact and includes all Land from Tisa to the Black Sea and from the Carpathians to the Balkans”³²; in the letter sent also to Ion Ghica, from London, in January 1/13, 1850, Bălcescu remind him: “the decision of Ionescu

(about the national organization of Romanians in Dobrudja – our note) is good, but you should not forget also the Macedo-Romanian.”³³

The Moldavian revolutionary Ion Ionescu dela Brad, he also exiled after 1848 in Turkey (will administrate, as agronomist, between 1853 and 1857, the lands of a high Ottoman official), met directly “the Romanian *shepherds* that were coming from the Epirus and Macedonia Mountains to spend the winter with their numerous flocks on the beautiful and vast plains of Thessaly”, relating later one of his meetings with them: “I was astonished seeing them all clean and well dressed, white and ruddy, tall, beautiful, strong and... with mirth. But the women? How good they looked with peasant trousers and sandals, with white embroidered shirts, plaits with red and blue ribbons and covered with white towels made of flax and silk. As shoes they all had peasant sandals! The peasant sandals, the traditional Romanian shoes, made me say hello, getting off my hat (...). I had remembered that I am also from the country from which peasant sandals come, so I said hallo to my people!

- People, what are you doing here?

- We have came, said one of them in Greek, to spend the winter here with these flocks.

- But, what are you?

- We are Romanians, said one who approached me bareheaded. I was bareheaded too.

- Are you Romanian? I asked in Romanian.

- Yes! I'm Romanian, Vlach, Christian.

- But who's are the sheep?

- The sheep are ours, we are shepherds.

The Romanians, as shepherds – *continues remembering the Romanian agronomist* –, take their flocks in the mountains on summer and in plains on winter. The Romanians have their villages with their homes in the Epirus and Macedonia Mountains, were they live. The most eager of them spend the winter with their flocks in the plain. Most of them were staying in the mountains and were sending their sheep with another shepherd which has his own sheep.

Although they speak Greek too, although they go at church were they read Greek only, they have still their own language they are speaking between them; within their family they speak only their language. They do not mix with the Greeks and do not marry with

them. They have different habits and customs then the Greeks. They have their own stories and tell these stories to one another, at the winter gatherings. *Their stories resemble with our stories* (our emphasis). They are in Orient, until today, a special nation. Their language shows the nation of which they are part, the Romanian nation. Many words, some of them correct and other damaged, show their Romanian origin. It seems – concludes *Ion Ionescu dela Brad* – they are the native people in the Balkan Peninsula.”³⁴

But Ion Ionescu dela Brad has also written a letter published in 1855 under the title *Românii din Macedonia porecliți kofo-vlahi și țințari* [The Romanians from Macedonia called also Macedo-Romanians]. The letter – requested by Vasile Alecsandri, the responsible editor of the *România literară* magazine (in Iași/Jassy), who wanted “a truthful and impartial information about the Romanians from Macedonia, Epirus, Albania, Thessaly where they are spread, about their manners, costume, language etc.” – contains very important information, the author surprising the state of mind of the Balkan Vlachs when they were not aware of their own ethnical-linguistic identity, being tributary to Greeks – especially the wealthy men, over the “shepherds” [*păștori*]: “You know very well that I love the Romanians in general; but I love more the truth. Thus, if I write in an impartial manner about them, you should take into account that I am saying the truth.

From Monastir or Bitolia, a town at some distance from Thessaloniki, the majority of Romanians receives a Greek education and adopts the customs and also the political opinions of the Greeks. All merchants speak Greek. *But their women do not want to learn this language. Only they are preserving among this people the national feelings* (our emphasis). If you say that a woman is Bulgarian or Greek, she is insulted: but the men are insulted if they are called Romanians. When a woman learns Greek, she must learn it with a teacher and other women criticize her. The majority of Romanian merchants and officials travels to Vienna and establishes trading houses between Macedonia and that capital, under the name of Greek houses – a reality often omitted even by historians.”³⁵

Almost the same relevance has the information contained in a documentary material attached to that letter and entitled *Statistics with the names and the populations of villages and local regions*

inhabited by Romanians in Epirus, Macedonia, Thessaly, Albania and Bosnia."³⁶

As a result of the sustained efforts of the Macedo-Romanian Committee's members (founded in Bucharest in 1860), on July 2, 1864 it opens the first Romanian school in the European Turkey/Ottoman Macedonia, at Târnova (a village close to Monastir/Bitolia).³⁷

Now begins a new stage in the historical evolution of the Balkan Vlachs, many of them aware of their membership in Romanian nationality.³⁸ Especially, after the establishment in 1879 – September 23, in Bucharest, on the initiative of some Romanian public personalities, as Vasile A. Urechia shows in his opening speech –, of *Societatea de Cultură Macedo-Română* [The Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society] (recognized as legal person on April 15, 1880), with the purpose: "*a*) to educate through schools the Romanian population over the Danube and the Balkans; *b*) to plead for the support of churches in the Romanian communities over the Danube and the Balkans; *c*) to monitor the existent schools and to improve the quality of education; *d*) to equip them with books, libraries, machines. The school must also support publishing books for the Romanian up there."³⁹

Conclusion

For centuries, the Vlachs from the Balkan Peninsula (*Aromanians* / *Macedoromanians*, and *Meglenoromanians*, respectively), descending from the Eastern Romanity, have carried out through their most capable,⁴⁰ diligent and intrepid elements, lucrative activities, as traders and craftsmen.

Although most of the South Danubian population raised sheep – particularly after World War I, when geopolitical circumstances allowed them to herd their flocks over a large area within the Ottoman Empire respectively, its European part –, this was not however their main occupation. Certain characteristics, such as their frugality, tenacity, ingenuity, honesty, grafted, in many cases, on hereditary abilities and skills, resulted in wide range occupations.

Starting with the latter half of the 18th century and, particularly with the next century, educated and Westerners travelers,

who traveled to the South of the Balkan Peninsula, refer more and more frequently to the history, the customs, the mentality, and the traditions of this Latin people, who singularized their existence among Slav, Greek or Islamized masses in such a dignified manner. All of them point out the distinguishing features of the Vlachs (Aromanians and Meglenoromanians) which make their presence so commanding, capable of attracting not only interest but also the admiration of those who encountered them.

NOTES:

¹ See, in context – H. Mihăescu, *La Romanité dans le Sud-Est de l'Europe*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1993, passim (600 pp.); Aurel Berinde, *Geneza romanității răsăritene. Din istoria dacoromânilor și macedoromânilor (aromânilor)*, Editura Bemirodan, Timișoara, 2002 (400 pp.); Nicolae Saramandu, *Romanitatea orientală*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2004 (346 pp.).

² N. Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains de la Péninsule des Balcons (Albanie, Macédoine, Épire, Thessalie, etc.)*, Publications de l'Institut pour l'Étude de l'Europe Sud-Orientale, Imprimerie "Cultura Neamului Românesc", Bucarest, 1919, passim (65 pp. + 1 map 1 tab.); also translated into Romanian in the same year (75 pp. + 1 map); Theodor Capidan, "Romanitatea balcanică" [The Balkan Romanity], Reception speech at the Romanian Academy, given on May 26th, 1936, in xxx *Discursuri de recepție la Academia Română*, Editura Albatros, București, 1980, pp. 221-237; Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, "Aperçus of the History of Balkan Romanity," in Răzvan Theodorescu and L.C. Barrows (eds.), *Politics and Culture in Southeastern Europe (UNESCO-CEPES)*, Series Studies on Science and Culture, no publisher, Bucharest, 2001, pp. 97-111; Stoica Lascu, "From the Romanized Population to Vlachs/Aromanians/Balkan Romanians," in *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, Tome LVI, Nos. 1-4, 2017, pp. 33-57.

³ See – *Idem*, "The constitution of the dimensions of Balkan Romanianism in the perception of the society of the Danubian Principalities (first half of the XIXth century)," in *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies*, Târgoviște, 18-19, 2012-2013, pp. 83-110.

⁴ *Id.*, "The first Romanian Perceptions on the Existence of the Balkan Romanity (17-18 centuries)," in *Dionysiana*, Constanța, XI, 1, 2017, pp. 315-335.

⁵ Enache Puiu, *Viața și opera lui Miron Costin* [The Life and Work of Miron Costin], Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1975, p. 265.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 264.

⁷ Miron Costin, *Opere*, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, București, 1958, p. 208.

⁸ Adolf Armbruster, *Romanitatea românilor. Istoria unei idei* [The Romanity of the Romanians. The History of an Idea], Ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită, Coll. Biblioteca Enciclopedică de Istorie a României, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1993, p. 211.

⁹ Miron Costin, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

¹⁰ Virgil Căndea, *Stolnicul între contemporani* [The Seneschal among Contemporaries], Editura Științifică, București, 1971, p. 110.

¹¹ N. Iorga, *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VIII: *Revoluționarii*, Volum îngrijit de Georgeta Filitti, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2006, p. 81.

¹² Stolnicul Constantin Cantacuzino, “Istoriia țării Rumânești de când au descălecat pravoslavnicii creștini (Letopisețul cantacuzinesc)” [The History of Romanian Country from the Descent of the Orthodox Christians (The Cantacuzean Chronicle)], in *Cronicari munteni*, Ediție îngrijită de Mihail Gregorian, Prefață și tabel cronologic de Dan Horia Mazilu, vol. I, Editura Minerva (Coll. *B.P.T.*), București, 1984, p. 42.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 42-44.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁵ Adolf Armbruster, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

¹⁶ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei* [The Description of Moldavia], Postfață și bibliografie de Magdalena Popa, Editura Minerva, București, 1986, pp. 167-168.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 415 (“Ita hodie Moldavi, Montani, Transalpini Valachi, Mysii, Bassarabienses et {{Epiresenses}} omne<s> generali nomine se non Vlachos, sed Romanos vocant, linguam vernaculam linguam Romanam dicunt; et si Moldavus, Muntanus (Sic!), Mysus etc. [si] alienigenam aut extraneum inter<r>ogaret, an sciret linguam eorum, sic inter<r>oga<re>t: Știi Românește, Scis Romanice?”).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 421, 423.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

²⁰ Thus, in the Moldavian idiom from the times of Cantemir, the beginnings of what he calls *Prevorovire înformuind cititoriul* [Pre-Word Informing the Reader]:

Istoricii dară, carii pentru mutarea romanilor din Dachia și Misia pomenesc, una numai, însă și aceia nu iușoară pricină arată, adecă: Avrelian împărat vădzind, dzic, că pe vremile împăraților carii fusese mai

denainte de dânsul la împărăție, varvarii crivățului, cu câteva năbușiri Misia (supt carea să înțelege și Dachia), Thrachia, Thessalia, Machedonia, Iliria, Greția (...) au fost încongiurat (...), să se fie lăsat de toată nedejde că va mai putea apăra Dachia de călcăturile lor, și așe coloniile și alalți lăcuitori românești, carii de atâta vreme într-înșă trăia, să fie poroncit să se rădice din Dachia și să triacă peste Dunăre decinde în Misia; care mutare să fie făcut, prepus nu iaste. Ce prepusul iaste, de s-au mai întors sau de nu s-au mai întors vreodată aceiași romani iarăși la moșiile lor în Dachia.

[The historians only mention one cause of this movement, meaning: Aurelian the Emperor seeing that barbarians invaded Moesia (including Dacia), Thrace, Thessaly, Macedonia, Illyricum, Greece (...) he was surrounded (...) and lost hope of defending Dacia of their trespasses, so that the colonies and other Romanian inhabitants, which lived there for so long, were ordered to arise from Dacia and to pass over the Danube in Moesia; there is not question whether the withdrawal happened. The issue is whether if they ever returned to their households in Dacia] –

Dimitrie Cantemir, *Hronicul vechimei a romano-moldo-vlahilor. Text ales și stabilit, tabel cronologic*, prefată și note de Stela Toma, Editura Albatros, București, 1981, pp. 90-91.

²¹ See – Stoica Lascu, “The Balkan Romanity in the Writings of Romanian Chroniclers and Representatives of the Enlightenment,” in *Балканите – Език, История. The Balkans – Languages, History, Cultures* (Международна Научна Конференция – ,13-15 Април 2007 г. International Conference – ,13-15 April 2007. Великотърновски Университет „Св. Св. Кирил и Методий”), University press „St. Cyril and St. Methodius”, no place [B. Търново /Veliko Tarnovo/], 2008, pp. 53-63.

²² Samuil Micu, Gheorghe Șincai, *Elementa linguae daco-romanae sive valachicae. Studiu introductiv*, traducerea textelor și note de Mircea Zdrenghia, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1980, p. 9.

²³ Samuil Micu, *Scurtă cunoștință a istoriei românilor* [Short Knowledge of the History of the Romanians]. Ediție de Cornel Cîmpeanu, Editura Științifică, București, 1963, p. 71; also see the text in the synthesis – xxx, *Școala Ardeleană*, vol. I. Ediție critică, note, bibliografie și glosar de Florea Fugariu. Introducere de Dumitru Ghișe și Pompiliu Teodor, Editura Minerva, București, 1983, pp. 233-234.

²⁴ Apud – Manole Neagoe, Prefată, in Gheorghe Șincai, *Cronica românilor*, Ediție de Florea Fugariu. Prefată, tabel cronologic și note de Manole Neagoe, Editura Minerva (Coll. B.P.T.), București, 1978, p. XXIII.

²⁵ Gheorghe Șincai, “Elementa lingvae Daco-Romanae sive Valachicae,” in xxx *Școala Ardeleană...*, vol. I, p. 598 (“Qui demum respectu antiquae

Daciae Trans-Istrianas inhabitant Provincia uno nomine, Țintiări, Graecis Κόζο, sive Κοτζο-Βλάχοι, Claudi Valachi appellantur”, p. 595).

²⁶ For the use of this ethnonym in Serbia, also see the title of the book published in Belgrade and translated in Romanian by C. Constante: D.I. Popovici, *Despre aromâni* (= *O Țințarima*). *Contribuțiuni cu privire la cheștiunea formării negoțului nostru*, Tipografia “Dorneanu”, București, 1934 (an added edition, published in Belgrade in 1937 under the title *O Țințarima. Prilozi pitanju postanka našeg gradanskog društva*). About this ethnonym also see – D. Dascalescu, *Scrisori din Țara Țințarească și Poezii Noue*, Tipografia Buciumului Roman, Iassi, 1856 (66 pp.) – the respective nicknames do not refer to the Tsintsars in the Balkans, despite the title, so that the presentation of this work in the *Bibliografia macedo-română* (Freiburg, p. 70), is not justified (see – E. Ciornaia, “Поезия луи Д. Дзскзлеску,” in Лимба ши литература молдовняскз [Chișinău/Kishinev], No. 4, 1972, pp. 62-73).

²⁷ Gheorghe Șincai, *Hronica românilor*, Tom I, in *Opere*, Ediție îngrijită și Studiu asupra limbii de Florea Fugariu. Prefață și Note de Manole Neagoe, vol. I, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1967, p. 49.

²⁸ Petru Maior, *Istoria pentru începutul românilor în Dacia* [The History of the Begining of the Romanians in Dacia], Ediție critică și Studiu introductiv asupra limbii de Florea Fugariu. Prefață și note de Manole Neagoe, Editura Albatros (Coll. Lyceum), București, 1970, vol. II, pp. 264-265.

²⁹ Morangiés, “Les Romounis de l’Anovalachie. Românii din Anovalahia,” in ‘*Spicuiorul*’ moldo-român, July, August, September 1841, p. 1 [parallel French-Romanian text] (the whole text is found at pp. 1-16) – more broadly, see Stoica Lascu, *Romanitatea balcanică în conștiința societății românești până la Primul Război Mondial*, Editura România de la Mare, Constanța, 2013, pp. 51-64; *Idem*, “The constitution of the dimensions of Balkan Romanianism...”

³⁰ Stelian Brezeanu, Gheorghe Zbucnea (eds.), *Românii de la sud de Dunăre. Documente*, Arhivele Naționale ale României, no publisher, București, 1997, p. 22 sqq. (Introduction).

³¹ Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere*, vol. IV: *Correspondență. Scrisori, memorii, adrese, documente, note și materiale*, Ediție critică de G. Zane și Elena G. Zane. Cu reproduceri după manuscrise și stampe, Ediția a III-a revăzută și adăugită, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1990, p. 174.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 160.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

³⁴ Ion Ionescu [dela Brad], “Păstorii români din Tessalia” [The Romanian Shepherds from Thessaly], in *Albumul macedo-român*, Sub direcțiunea lui

V.A. Urechia, Stabilimentul pentru artele grafice Socecă, Sander & Teclu, București, 1880, p. 55.

³⁵ *Idem*, “Românii din Macedonia porecliți koço-vlahi și țințari” [The Romanians from Macedonia Called also Macedo-Romanians], in *România literară*, I, No. 45, November 19, 1855, pp. 517-519.

³⁶ *Id.*, “Statistică de numirile și populațiile satelor și polițiilor locuite de români în Epir, Macedonia, Tesalia, și vreo câteva în Albania și Bosnia” [Statistics of the Names and the Populations of the Villages and Regions Inhabited by Romanians in Epirus, Macedonia, Thessaly, and Some in Albania and Bosnia], in *Ibidem*, I, No. 46, November 26, 1855, p. 532.

³⁷ See, in context – Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu, Maria Petre, *Școli și biserici românești din Peninsula Balcanică* [Romanian Schools and Churches in the Balkan Peninsula]. *Documente (1864-1948)*, Adunarea și selecționarea documentelor, introducerea, bibliografia și indicii de... Prezentul volum a fost realizat în urma documentării la Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe și la Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Editura Universității din București, București, 2004 (668 pp.) (226 doc.); vol. II (1918-1953), 2006 (710 pp.) (353 doc.); Victor Papacostea, Mihail Regleanu, *Documentele redeșteptării macedoromâne*. Adunate și selectate de... Ediție întocmită de Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca și Ștefan Vâlcu. Cu colaborarea Iulianei Deac. Pe baza manuscrisului din arhiva Institutului de Studii și Cercetări Balcanice din București (Institutul de Studii Sud-Est Europene al Academiei Române. I. *Izvoare privitoare la istoria Romanității Balcanice*), Editura Predania (Proiect Avdhela. Biblioteca Culturii Aromâne), București, 2013 /470 pp./. Also – Ion I. Solcanu, “La Fondation et l'Appui Matériel des Écoles Roumaines au Sud du Danube par les Principautés Unies (1860-1872),” in *Annals of the Academy of Romanian Scientists. Series on History and Archeology*, Volume 3, Number 4, 2011, pp. 41-78; and recently – *Idem*, “Romanian Gymnasiums, Pedagogical Schools and Highschools Established and Subsidised by the Romanian Governments for the Aromanians in Greece (1880-1900),” in *Ibidem*, Volume 11, Number 1, 2019, pp. 31-51.

³⁸ A synthesis in – Stoica Lascu, “De la population romanisée aux Valaques, Aroumains, Roumains balkaniques,” in *Романистика и Балканистика. Зборник на трудови во чест на проф. д-р Петар Атанасов по повод 75 години од животот. Во редакција на Мирјана Алексоска-Чкатроска и коредакција на Јоана Хаџи-Лега Христоска*, Edited by Mirjana Alekoska-Chkatroska. Co-edited by Joana Hadži-Lega Hristosk (Универзитет „Св. Кирил и Методиј” Скопје. Филолошки факултет „Блаже Конески” Скопје), Скопје, 2014, especially pp. 388-411 [377-428].

³⁹ Stelian Brezeanu, Gheorghe Zbucnea (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 163-165 (doc. 58); also, in context – Stoica Lascu, “Documente arhivistice privind membrii și situația Societății de Cultură Macedo-Române (1895),” in Sorin Liviu Damean, Marusia Cîrstea, Mihaela Damean, Lucian Dindirică (eds.), *Permanențele istoriei. Profesorul Corneliu-Mihail Lungu la 70 de ani*, Universitatea din Craiova. Departamentul de Istorie și Relații Internaționale. Consiliul Județean Dolj, Biblioteca Județeană „Alexandru și Aristia Aman” Dolj, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2013, pp. 284-306.

⁴⁰ For Medieval Times, to see, in context – Idem, “Balkan Vlachs – Autonomies and Modernity,” in Maria Baramova, Plamen Mitev, Ivan Parvev, Vania Racheva (eds.), *Power and Influence in South-Eastern Europe 16th-19th century*, LIT Verlag, Berlin/Zürich, 2013, pp. 191-207.

Identitatea națională românească în poezia lui Mihai Eminescu

Abstract: The present research paper starts from the hypothesis that the Romanian national poet Mihai Eminescu, during his journeys through several Romanian provinces starting with the “sweet” Bucovina and the fertile Moldova and its younger sister, Bessarabia, going through Transylvania and Banat in order to settle temporarily in Muntenia, was able to come to his own conviction about the identity and unity of the Romanian nation.

*Țara este rodul a zeci de generații și aparține altor zeci
de generații care vor veni....*
(M. Eminescu)

Așa cum este așezat la granița estică a Europei, unde a fost gardat de mari imperii într-o evoluție dramatică în timp, poporul român a avut în secolul al XIX-lea, numit al constituirii naționalităților, șansa de a începe procesul de unificare a provinciilor în care istoria l-a rupt neconținut. Fără a cădea în capcana aprecierilor subiectiv-mitizante, am pornit în cercetarea de față de la ipoteza că poetul Mihai Eminescu, de la a cărei naștere tocmai s-au împlinit 170 de ani, în timpul peregrinărilor prin diferite provincii ale românismului, începând de la Bucovina cea „dulce” și mănoasa Moldovă¹ și „mezina” ei, Basarabia, colindând Transilvania și Banatul, spre a se stabili temporar în Muntenia, și-a format propria lui convingere despre identitatea și unitatea poporului român. Este o convingere pe care am constatat aplecându-ne atent asupra textelor că o reflectă nu numai publicistica lui, ci și poezia eminesciană,

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începând chiar din anii debutului. Am descoperit în textele lui adolescente, peste care exegeții au trecut cu ușurință, liniile de forță ale crezului său politic și cele ale universului liric de mai târziu.

Moldoveanul Eminescu a trăit pe viu în 1867 încadrarea Transilvaniei în Imperiul Austro-Ungar, apoi eliberarea României de jugul otoman în Războiul de independență din 1877-1878 și nu a încetat să militeze pentru o Românie Mare, amintind de Dacia străbunilor. Vom contrazice ideea că Eminescu a fost un romantic visător, urcat într-un turn de fildeș spre a medita asupra rosturilor existenței umane, pentru că el în realitate era un poet de simțire patriotică, cu o puternică atitudine civică. Poetul a fost dublat de publicistul angajat politic, care răspundea ca mânuitor al condeiului la problemele acute ale neamului său, iar calibrarea cu exactitate a ponderii pe care cele 3000 de texte ziaristice eminesciene o au în raport cu universul beletristic creat este pe mai departe o lacună majoră a posterității geniului absolut al culturii noastre naționale.

I. Ce sens dădea poetul cuvântului România?

Ne-am pus întrebarea ce cuprindere avea în concepția lui Eminescu etnonimul ROMÂN și de aici denominația ROMÂNIA într-o vreme când acestea au fost neoficial atestate, căci ele apăruseră în uz mai timpuriu². Se știe că la inițiativa domnitorului Al. I. Cuza, nou ales, în prima adunare generală de după Unire s-a dat numele de „România” celor două țării, precizare făcută în primul articol al Constituției din 1 iulie 1866.³

Dar Eminescu dădea în poemul *Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce România*⁴, zămislit exact în acel moment istoric, un sens mult mai cuprinzător cuvântului România, așa cum constatăm că el definește țara: „Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie,/ Țara mea de glorie, țara mea de dor?” Țara visată de români cuprindea și provinciile răpite la vremea aceea, în a 2-a jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Fără îndoială că adolescentul cu minte genială nu se referă în poemul său doar la cele două Principate Române, care atunci erau Moldova și Valahia, pentru că în această poezie el cugetă la destinul întregului său popor. Atunci când scrie versurile „Spună lumii large steaguri tricolore,/ Spună ce-i poporul mare, românesc,” poetul creează o viziune organic cuprinzătoare care se va păstra și în poeziile *La arme* și *Doina*, ce

constituie un filon de autentică relevanță spre afirmarea identității naționale.

Faptul că nu s-a păstrat manuscrisul poemului⁵ *Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie* nu diminuează importanța lui. Această poezie definitorie pentru cugetarea sa patriotică din perioada debutului este în fapt un program de atitudine politică pe care el avea să-l slujească întreaga sa viață ca poet și ca cetățean, cum dovedesc în egală măsură versurile sale și publicistica.

Important de observat este faptul că tocmai această poezie de un patriotism năvalnic nu a fost selectată pentru volumul *Poesii* din 1884 de Titu Maiorescu, dovedind că nu i-a intuit nici semnificația ideatică, nici pe cea artistică. Criticul ținuse să specifice interesul pentru versurile debutului eminescian în acea primă antologie, creată dintr-o „datorie literară”, cea de a face „mai ușor accesibile pentru iubitorii de literatura noastră toate scrierile poetice, *chiar și cele începătoare* (s.n.), ale unui autor, care a fost înzestrat cu darul de a întrupa adâncă sa simțire și cele mai înalte gânduri într-o frumusețe de forme, subțil al cărei farmec limba română pare a primi o nouă viață.”⁶ Așadar, o omisiune gravă, după opinia noastră, iar Constantin Noica își permitea o ironizare când se referea la selecția în sine făcută de cunoscutul critic, atunci când opinează că „pentru Maiorescu poezia lui Eminescu se reducea la volumul tipărit de el. Cu 90 de poezii-sau ceva în jurul acestei cifre-Eminescu intra dintr-o dată în absolutul românesc. Restul? Restul i se părea lui Maiorescu maculatură sau, în orice caz, încercare nereușită, strădanie de cercetător și, în definitiv, lucru bun de lăsat undeva, în lada pe care o primise de la Slavici. Poate că nici nu s-a uitat de-a binelea în lada aceea.”⁷

II. Viziunea integratoare a poetului asupra patriei sale

Cuvântul „patrie” apare efectiv în versuri scrise la Blaj în 1966, anul debutului său, intitulate *Din străinătate*, unde „Un suflet numai plânge, în doru-i se avântă/ L-a patriei dulci plaiuri, la câmpii-i răsători.” Versurile din poezia *La Bucovina* atestă punctul de pornire geopolită a patriotismului său: „N-oi uita vreodată, dulce Bucovină,/ Geniu-ți romantic, munții în lumină,/ Văile în flori,/ Râuri resăltânde printre stânce nante,/ Apele lucinde-n dalbe diamante/ Peste câmpii-n zori.” Iată spațiul-matrice al patriei sale, format din munți, ape și

câmpii, care va susține întregul univers poetic de mai târziu.⁸ Plecând din „dulcea” lui patrie, ca zonă natală, Eminescu transferă acest epitet printr-o extensie geopolitică la „dulce Românie” în poemul profesiei sale de credință națională.

Cu febrilitatea descoperirii esenței românismului, Eminescu străbătea Transilvania⁹ și biografii săi au stăruit asupra dorinței lui de a ajunge la Blaj, acolo „unde a răsărit soarele românismului”. S-a consemnat modul simbolic în care el, ridicându-se în trăsura care ajunsese în Hula de deasupra Blajului, și-a fluturat pălăria, iar cuvintele rostite atunci au fost consemnate de istorie: „Te salut din inimă, Roma-mică. Îți mulțumesc, Dumnezeu, că m-ai ajutat să o pot vedea”¹⁰. Acest moment s-a petrecut în 1866, când adolescentul dovedea o profundă și certă înțelegere a legăturii dintre diferitele provincii românești, iar durerea lui neostoită era provocată de faptul că unele dintre ele erau subjugate.

Iată pentru ce, în poezia *La arme*, verbul mobilizator primește luciri tăioase, revendicative, într-o cuprinzătoare panoramă a provinciilor românești înrobite de străini. Poetul începe prin a cere eliberarea blândeii Basarabiei, al cărei martiriu este metaforizat într-o imagine tragică: „Și sora noastră cea mezină/ Gemând sub cnutul de calmuc/ Legată-n lanțuri a ei mână,/ De ștreang târând-o ei o duc.” Maghiarilor, cotropitori ai Transilvaniei române, el le pregătește o riposte pe măsură, căci ... „brațul nostru-o să vă farne/ Și robi veți fi, măriți stăpâni,/ La arme, la arme,/ La arme, frați români!” Atunci când se referă la plaiurile natale, antiteza dintre trecutul măreț și prezentul înrobite îi inspiră personificarea: „Iar tu, iubită Bucovină,/ Diamant din steaua lui Ștefan,/ Ajuns-ai roabă și cadână/ Pe mâni murdare de jidan,/ Rușinea ta nu are seamă/ Pământul sfânt e pângărit”. Îndemnul la luptă eroică țintește și pe tătarii sau pe leșii invadatori de plai mioritic, pentru care el nu are nici înțelegere, nici iertare. Scrisă la flacăra unei simțiri patriotice incandescente, poezia *La arme* sfârșește cu versul semnificativ „La arme, frații mei români”, dovedind că în conștiința sa nu se face diferență între românii niciunei provincii istorice.¹¹

Eminescu trăia intuitiv transformarea poporului în națiune și națiunea română se trezește politic, organizându-se într-un stat modern ce luptă să-și afirme identitatea. În ciuda divizării politice, neamul românesc își manifesta comunitatea de limbă, de sânge și destin istoric, de tradiții și spiritualitate, păstrate cu sfințenie.¹² Faptul

că atât de proaspătul stat, care era atunci România, se afla așezat între mari imperii, a cerut aplicarea unor strategii abile pentru a supraviețui și prospera. Eminescu s-a implicat ca ziarist în lupta pentru croirea unui drum propriu, manifestându-se ca o conștiință trează, care și-a exprimat punctul de vedere fără nicio rezervă, indiferent de conjunctura de moment. Redactorul-șef de la ziarul conservator *Timpul* nu ataca numai greșelile pe care le făcea guvernul liberal condus de C. A. Rosetti, ci el critică atitudinea prea îngăduitoare a însuși Regelui Carol I, atacată cu argumentele unui analist politic experimentat: „Despotismul, oricât de odios ar fi, totuși are mai multă îngrijire de popor decât republica străinilor din România, cu eticheta ei monarhică.”¹³ Regresul datorat unei politici demagogice nefaste îl îndurează și îl determină pe publicist să recurgă la o încadrare istorică a perioadei prezente: „Față cu guvernele econoame, modeste, harnice ale Domnilor români de la 1821-1857, față cu guvernul de emancipare politică și socială a lui Cuza se va-ncepe de-acum înainte, în zilele lui Carol Îngăduitorul, a doua ediție a domniei fanarioților.”¹⁴ Cu deplină înțelegere a adevărului, Eminescu deosebea poporul român, la care admira vechimea sa milenară și înzestrarea morală cu hărnicie și dragoste de tradiție, de veneticii aciuiți în statul prosper de la Dunăre. Ziaristul anatemizează cu revoltă și amărăciune un regim politic în care „s-a cocoțat o mână de grecotei și de bulgăroi malonești care formează un ciudat epizod în istoria noastră.”¹⁵ Din această realitate se va nutri și seva satirei din *Scrisoarea III*, în care la modul ironic sunt țintiți acei „bulgăroi cu ceafa groasă” și „grecotei cu nas subțire”. Așa cum ține să o exprime în mod răspicat I. Slavici, unul dintre cei mai apropiați scriitori ai săi, „Vorba nu e de greci care fie în Grecia, fie aiurea ostenesec și aduc jertfe spre a ridica nivelul moral și intelectual al poporului grecesc, nici de bulgari care aduc jertfe în interesul poporului bulgar, nici măcar de greci și de bulgari care pe pământul României își agonisesc averi prin muncă cinstită, ci de niște oameni ca Dandanache, care s-au lepădat de neamul lor, de părinți și de frați și strigă-n gura mare că sunt chiar mai români decât românii de obârșie, iar aceasta pentru ca, prostind lumea, să-și asigure pozițiuni în statul român, să-ngrămădească bogății și să poată trăi pe nemuncite în răsfațare.”¹⁶

Depart de a dovedi o atitudine xenofobă, cum au încercat unii interpreți să insinueze, Eminescu consemna o realitate politică intolerabilă, provocată de populația străină ridicată la un milion de

imigranți, care nici nu știau vorbi românește, dar aveau ambiția de a conduce poporul ospitalier și tolerant care i-a primit. Ioan Slavici evoca anii petrecuți împreună ca studenți la Viena și ca ziariști la București, ținând că consemneze adevărul că „Eminescu și-a dat cea mai mare parte din viață și cea mai bună parte din sufletul lui ca să cunoască până în cele mai mici amănunte viața poporului român și rostul neamului românesc în lumea aceasta, iar silințele lui n-au rămas zadarnice.”¹⁷ Atacurile fervente din publicistica eminesciană împotriva dușmanilor poporului român, și mă refer atât la cei dinlăuntrul națiunii sale, unde ținta erau politicienii malonești, cât și la cei din afară, fie ei ruși, evrei, turci, greci, bulgari, unguri, germani etc., nu se datorau urii pătimase ori xenofobe, ci dorinței de a apăra neamul său urgisit.

Idealul național pentru care a militat a dovedit vizionarismul și inteligența sa politică. „Poetul a fost înzestrat cu o imensă capacitate de a iubi poporul român de pretutindeni - observa Mihai Dorin - de a se identifica cu toate durerile ce se cuprind „de la Nistru pân’ la Tisa”, dar a repudiat constant discursul frivol pe tema națională.”¹⁸

Exponențialitatea unei conștiințe naționale ardente

Definiția pe care Eminescu a dat-o poporului român nu lasă loc niciunei îndoieli, căci termenii folosiți de el sunt superlativi: „Viteaz în războaie, muncitor și cinstit în timp de pace, grăitor de adevăr, glumeț și senin, drept și bun la inimă ca un copil, poporul românesc nu e capabil nici de trădare, nici de infamie.”¹⁹

Realitatea este că Eminescu avea o viziune integratoare despre neamul său, așa cum dovedește și poezia *Doina*, unde în versuri mobilizatoare deplânge soarta conaționalilor lui din Basarabia, Bucovina și Transilvania. O formă inversată a verbului „a se plânge”, care chiar prin reflexivitatea lui devine mai puternic în versul „Tot românul plânsu-mi-s-a”, dovedește că poetul la modul exponențial preia durerea tuturor românilor, pe care îi reprezintă: „De la Nistru pân’ la Tisa/ Tot românul plânsu-mi-s-a/ Că nu mai poate străbate/ De-atâta străinătate.” El are simțirea responsabilă a unui spirit decident și justițiar. Pericolul înstrăinării pământului milenar, moștenit de la strămoșii daci, amenință însăși condiția poporului său. El are o conștiință mereu trează și durerea neamului sărăcit de atâtea

asupriri străine îi provoacă lamentația: „Vai de biet român săracul!/ Îndărăt tot dă ca racul,/ Nici îi merge, nici se-ndeamnă,/ Nici îi este toamna toamnă,/ Nici e vară vara lui,/ Și-i străin în țara lui.” Cele mai importante anotimpuri în calendarul agrar și-au pierdut semnificația, pentru că țăranul nu mai recoltează toamna ceea ce a muncit întreaga vară, ci roadele pământului, pe care ei le trudesă din greu, ajung în mâna stăpânilor străini. Iată o realitate intolerabilă pentru conștiința profund românească a poetului. În versurile scurte, lipsite de metaforizări lirice ale poeziei *Doina*, Eminescu exprimă o idee națională profundă, un crez politic, prin care îndeamnă la stărpirea străinilor cotropitori din provinciile istorice ale României. În mod simbolic poetul recurge la exemplul istoric al Marelui Ștefan, la care face apel printr-o invocație retorică devenită celebră: „Ștefane, Măria Ta,/ tu la Putna nu mai sta/... Doar s-a-ndura Dumnezeu,/ Ca să-ți mântui neamul tău!/ Tu te-nață din mormânt,/ Să te-aud din corn sunând/ Și Moldova adunând./ ..De-i suna de două ori, / Îți vin codri-n ajutor,/ De-i suna a treia oară/ Toți dușmanii or să piară/ Din hotară în hotară.”

Îndrăgostit de istorie, Eminescu alegea figura domnitorului Mircea cel Bătrân cu epoca sa de izbânzi eroice, ca imagine antitetică pentru virulentul pamflet politic din poemul *Scrisoarea III*, în care a fost creată cea mai strălucită lecție de istorie națională din toată literatura română. Preludiată de imaginea transformării în realitate a visului legendar de ascensiune a Imperiului otoman, înfruntarea „la Rovine în câmpii” a sultanului Baiazid Fulgerul cu Bătrânul Mircea, domnitorul Țării Românești, conduce spre formularea unei filosofii politice a neamului nostru: „Eu? Îmi apăr sărăcia și nevoile și neamul.../ Și de-aceea tot ce mișcă-n țara asta râul, ramul,/ Mi-e prieten numai mie, iară ție dușman este,// Dușmănit vei fi de toate, fără a prinde chiar de veste;/ N-avem oști, dară iubirea de moșie e un zid/ Care nu se-nfiorează de-a ta faimă, Baiazid!”.

Bătălia de la Rovine evocată în continuare va dovedi că aliații neînțeleși de otomanii cei făloși au fost pentru apărătorii de glie strămoșească, atât codrii de stejar în care se pregătea înfruntarea militară cât și manifestarea dragostei de țară, care nutrea dârzenia cu care luptau valahii. Tabloul dinamic al bătăliei are o deschidere panoramică, versurile având imprimat ritmul înaintării oștenilor lui Mircea, care dă curaj prin propriul lui exemplu de vitejie: „Risipite se-mprăștie a dușmanilor șireaguri,/ Și gonind biruitoare tot veneau a

țării steaguri./ Ca potop ce prăpădește, ca o mare turburată/ Peste-un ceas păgânătatea e ca pleava vânturată./Acea grindin-oțelită înspre Dunăre o mână./ Iar în urma lor se-ntinde falnic armia română.”

Câteva concluzii privind naționalismul lui Eminescu

Privit din perspectiva prezentului postdecembrist, când poezii ca *Doina*, *La arme* au fost repuse în circulație, primul atac antieminescian, pe care în 1891 A. Grama îl focalizase tocmai pe lipsa naționalismului, apare total fals, explicat fie prin ignoranță, fie prin reavoință, cum pe bună dreptate comentase și D. Murărașu²⁰. Mircea Eliade „vedea în Eminescu pe teoreticianul, prin excelență, al românismului și naționalismului românesc”²¹

S-a scris mult despre așa-zisul naționalismul xenofob al lui Eminescu, dar nici articolele de presă și nici poezii precum *La arme* sau *Doina* nu pot fi înțelese fără a se recurge la o încadrare în contextul politic al epocii și fără obiectivitate în interpretare. Numai astfel putem atesta autenticitatea naționalismului pe care Mihai Eminescu l-a trăit cu toată însuflețirea și l-a exprimat cu ajutorul armei sale care era cuvântul. „Sentimentul imperfecțiunii lumii - va constata Bianca Osnaga - vine din conștiința regresului și degradării prezentului patriei, a perisabilității, a insuficienței forței de a se opune răului, a alienării, a singurătății, din constatarea insensibilității și meschinăriei semenilor. Conștiința de sine a poetului, angajat, revoltat, de la *Junii corupți* până la *Scrisori*, este de esență eroică: verbul său tinde să marcheze posteritatea, să restaureze lumea, pornind de la convingerea că aceasta e perfectibilă.”²² În numele convingerii că poate îndrepta lumea prin flacăra aprinsă a cuvântului său, Eminescu dădea în *Scrisoarea III* contemporanilor lui și viitorimii o inegalabilă lecție de istorie națională. Inițial, în manuscrisul 2282 partea secundară a poemului se intitula *Patria și patrioții*, dovadă că gândirea poetului pivota pe ideea patriotismului. „Au de *patrie*, *virtute* nu vorbește liberalul/ De ai crede că viața-i e curată ca cristalul?”

Ideea de naționalitate nu se oprește în prezent, ci Eminescu își îndreaptă gândul și spre generațiile ce vin. „În trecut ni s-a impus o istorie, în viitor să ne-o facem noi.”²³ sună una dintre convingerile lui cele mai ferme, ce pot fi corelate ca mesaj cu *Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce României*, *La arme* și *Doina*.

Interesant a nuanțat ideea marii uniri Constantin Noica atunci când, poposind la Sibiu, respectiv în Ardealul, „de unde au venit toate descălecările”, constata că prin actul de la 1 Decembrie 1918 „Vechiul Regat s-a alipit la Ardeal! Știți unde am văzut asta cel mai bine? Am văzut-o întâi prin tot ce este valabil pe arcu Carpaților, în Muntenia și poate în Moldova, am văzut oieri ardeleni peste tot, de la Câmpulung-Muscel până la Buzău, și am văzut mai ales în cuvinte. În cuvinte... Și descălecările acestea ale cuvintelor m-au făcut să înțeleg că Patria Mamă este aici.”²⁴ Nu întâmplător vedea Noica în Eminescu dincolo de marele poet al neamului și un pedagog, nu mai puțin însemnat, unul care a făcut din unitatea neamului „visul său de fier”, încredințat spre împlinire generațiilor viitorului.

Realitatea este că citind și acum, la început de secol al XXI-lea, poezia patriotică și publicistica semnată de Eminescu, găsim dezbătute multe dintre problemele care ne frământă în prezent, determinându-ne să-l considerăm pe acest neîntrecut plămăditor de cuvânt românesc drept contemporanul nostru. Vom recunoaște în Eminescu etalonul de platină al cugetării lirice românești, amintindu-ne de opinia lui C. Noica despre el: „Arborii nu cresc până la cer. Nici noi nu putem crește dincolo de măsura noastră. Și măsura noastră este Eminescu. Nu vom crește mai mult decât atât. Atât însă să creștem. Pentru că sufletul trebuie hrănit ca pământul. Și dacă nu ne vom hrăni cu Eminescu ... atunci vom rămâne în cultură mai departe înfometaji.”²⁵

Conceptul de patrie este o realitate substanțială, constant afirmată în creația poetică și în cea publicistică a lui Eminescu, aceste două forme de discurs dialogând pe acest filon ca niște vase comunicante. În literatura română modelul eminescian a fost urmat pe linia naționalismului autentic de poeți ca George Coșbuc, Octavian Goga, Aron Cotruș, Ioan Alexandru, Vasile Militaru și alții, care au putut da o extindere mai mare temei patriotice, îmbogățind-o imagistic, dar nu au reușit să egaleze exemplaritatea artistică a versurilor lui.

NOTES:

¹ În Mss. Acad. Rom. 2258, fol.190 verso se găsește exclamația sa „Moldovo! mamă, mamă” ce atestă apartenența sa funciară la această provincie a României.

² O cercetare a făcut în acest sens istoricul bănățean Ioan Hațegan, constatând că în presă puțin înainte de Revoluția de la 1848, dar cu sensul unirii tuturor descendenților Imperiului Roman de Răsărit, „România” desemna singura țară neolatină rămasă din Imperiul Bizantin, ea fiind înconjurată de popoare slave.

³ Grigore Ioniță a făcut un studiu pe această temă, constatând că în Adunările ad-hoc din 7 și 8 octombrie 1857 se cerea unirea într-un singur stat numit România, dar solicitarea a fost respinsă de marile puteri în Convenția de la Paris din 1858, unde se impunea ca să se păstreze denumirea „Principatele unite ale Moldovei și Valahiei”. La 1 iulie 1866 a fost promulgată Constituția, în care apare denumirea „România”.

⁴ Poezia a fost publicată în *Familia* de la “Oradea, an III, nr.14, din 2/14 aprilie 1867, dar nu se păstrează manuscrisul acestui text.

⁵ Vezi Perpessicius, în M. Eminescu, *Opere alese*, I, Ediția a II-a, Editura Minerva, București, 1973, p. 266.

⁶ T. Maiorescu, */Cuvânt înainte/*, M.Eminescu, *Poesii*, Editura Librăriei Socec &Comp., București, 1884, p. II. Aversiunea sa declarată față de imixtiunea politicului în literatură explică această omisiune, prin care criticul scotea în afara universului poetic eminescian o asemenea perlă a patriotismului românesc.

⁷ C. Noica, *Introducere la miracolul eminescian*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1992, p. 69.

⁸ Ca redactor la ziarul *Timpu*, Eminescu discuta pe bază de documente istorice destinul Bucovinei, supuse Austriei și cel al Basarabiei, care este „bucată din patria noastră străveche, este zestrea împărțitului și nenorocitului popor românesc”, apud M. Eminescu, *Opere*, ed. I. Crețu, vol. II, p. 286.

⁹ În 1864, 1865, 1866, 1868 el poposea la Sibiu, dar îl aflăm, de asemenea, la Brașov, la Alba Iulia, la Blaj etc., colindând cu trupe de teatru spațiul românesc al Transilvaniei.

¹⁰ Apud G. Călinescu, *Viața lui Mihai Eminescu*, Editura Litera, Chișinău, 1998, p. 92.

¹¹ Privind legătura lui Eminescu, poet și mai ales ziarist, cu diferitele provincii ale românismului, deja la începutul secolului al XX-lea s-au realizat cercetări remarcabile, datorate lui I. Scurtu, I. Duma, I. Ornea, E. Dăianu, R. I. Sbiera etc.

¹² Articolul „În unire e țaria”, semnat cu pseudonimul Varro în *Federațiunea*, III, din 22/10 aprilie 1870 atestă continuitatea luptei lui.

- ¹³M. Eminescu, „Luptătorul...”, în *Timpul* din 3 aug. 1882, reprodus în *Opere*, vol. XIII, Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1985, p. 157.
- ¹⁴M. Eminescu, „Se-nțelege, că, după manifestul...”, în *Timpul* din 25 martie 1883, reprodus în *Opere*, vol. XIII, ed. cit., p. 279.
- ¹⁵M. Eminescu, „Foile noastre...”, în *Timpul* din 1 sept.1881, reprodus în *Opere*, vol. XII, ed. cit., p. 318.
- ¹⁶I. Slavici, Prefață la *Amintiri*, Ediție îngrijită, prefață, note și indici de George Sanda, Editura pentru Literatură, 1967, p. 6.
- ¹⁷I. Slavici, „,Poporanismul’ lui Eminescu”, în *Amintiri*, ed. cit., p. 32.
- ¹⁸Mihai Dorin, „Patrimoniul unitar al civilizației românilor”, în *Civilizația românească în viziunea lui Eminescu*, Editura Fundației culturale românești, București, 1998.
- ¹⁹M. Eminescu, Mss. Acad. Române 2257.
- ²⁰Vezi D. Murărașu, *Naționalismul lui Eminescu*, Editura „Elida” și „Etios”, Brașov, 2000, p. 4.
- ²¹Eminescu, apud Cezar Braia, „Eminescu, ideea națională și visul Unirii celei Mari”, în *Portal Maiastrea*, Tg. Jiu, an XIV, Nr. 4 (57), 2018, p. 5.
- ²²Bianca Osnaga, *Conștiința tragică eminesciană*, Editura Eikon, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 243.
- ²³M. Eminescu, *Opere*, vol. IX, Editura Academiei, 1980, p. 443.
- ²⁴C. Noica, *Introducere la miracolul eminescian*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1992, p.78.
- ²⁵Apud, Th. Damian, „Naționalism și patriotism la Eminescu”, în *Ardealul literar*, Deva, nr. 1-2, 2019, p. 6.

Universul carceral al comunismului românesc reflectat în mărturiile lui Nicolae Steinhardt și Demostene Andronescu

Abstract. Among the important personalities of the Romanian interwar landscape that were victims of communist regime being imprisoned, Nicolae Steinhardt, a Jew who converted to Orthodoxy and was baptised in the prison and later become a monk, and Demostene Andronescu, are for sure important names. Due to the fact that they left to the posterity two important testimonies regarding the prisons and the way how the communists have tried to exterminate them, we will try there to present the way how they see the prison system of communist regime and which were, according to their thinking, its defining elements. In the same time, we will try to emphasize the role played by the faith in their life there and to speak about the way how they were transformed by this experience and helped by their faith to understand it and to see the others through the lengths of Christian spirituality and mystique.

Universul concentraționar a reprezentat cu certitudine o experiență dureroasă pentru întregul spațiu comunist. Mărturiile supraviețuitorilor vin să certifice acest fapt, iar textele unor scriitori precum Soljenițan¹, sau corespondențele de gulag² vorbesc cu tristețe despre el. A constituit însă și creuzetul apariției și fortificării unor oameni ce vor deveni adevărați „sfinți ai închisorilor”³ și izvorul unei valoroase literaturi cu caracter testimonial.⁴

Despre dimensiunea dezumanizantă a acestei experiențe⁵, dar și despre valoarea ei pentru viața duhovnicească au vorbit și autorii

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pe care dorim să îi prezentăm în rândurile următoare, respectiv părintele Nicolae Steinhardt și Demostene Andronescu, doi supraviețuitori ai universului concentraționar. Am considerat potrivit să investigăm dinamica fenomenului represiv din spațiul românesc în comunism pornind de la aceste două mărturii. Cei doi autori, dintre care unul este încă în viață, sunt două profiluri diferite, ambele cu vocație mistică.

Scriitor renumit, publicat încă din timpul comunismului și redescoperit constant postum⁶, cu opera re-editată și tradusă în mod constant, Nicolae Steinhardt (1912-1989), va fi încarcerat între 1958-1964, în procesul Noica-Pilat, trecând prin diferite penitenciare și cunoscând experiența carcerală în mai multe locații. Aici, datorită celor trăite, se va converti la creștinism (fiind evreu de origine și de religie mozaică), fiind botezat de către părintele Mina Dobzeu⁷. Demostene Andronescu va fi încarcerat pentru crezurile sale legionare și va scrie despre experiența sa după eliberare, atât în versuri⁸.

Deși discontinue și dedicate cu precădere experienței mistice⁹, notele viitorului monah vor conține și descrieri procesului¹⁰ și experiențelor carcerale. Cel care va ajunge să fie atât de iubit deopotrivă de compartimii săi din țară și cei din exil¹¹, va scrie cu greutate și parcă cu sfială despre cele trăite în închisoare. Și totuși, uneori o va face. Descrierile sale nu se vor concentra însă asupra descrierii unor fenomene mundane, ci mai degrabă a unei stări generale, a cadrului dezolant de ură, suspiciune și răutate ce domnea acolo. Iată, de exemplu, ce își va aminti el cu privire la lunile octombrie și noiembrie 1962, petrecute la Gherla:

În camera 44 de la Gherla, cameră de infirmerie, cunosc atmosfera total opusă celei din tunelul 34 de la Reduit.

Ura clocotește, pâra se simte la ea acasă, pizma și zavistia aici și-au așezat jilțurile, dracii dănțuie, iar Belzebul joacă tontoroii ca pe moșia lui taică-său, de cine să-i pese. Urzici, cucută, mătrăgună. La urma urmei, scrie Bergson, de ce n-am presupune o viață întemeiată nu pe combinații ale oxigenului, azotului, hidrogenului și carbonului, ci pe combinații ale cobaltului spre pildă? Și de ce n-ar fi lumi unde nu bioxidul de carbon, ci amoniacul asigură fotosinteza și rodirea? Antroposofia lui Rudolf Steiner descrie în afara universului nostru armonic un altul, sincopat.

În camera 44 e o lume sincopată, o lume amoniacală. Neîncrederea și bântuiala au pustiit totul, ca vipiile vântului de

stepă, dogoritor. Nu numai că oamenii nu-și vorbesc după cuviință, nu numai că nu-și mai vorbesc deloc, dar nici nu-și mai adresează injurii. Norii apăsători ai electricității mănii se izbesc de norii puhavi ai electricității oțărării. O pâclă grea, uneori tulburată de avâcnirile harței spontane.

Fiecare bolnav este convins că ceilalți sunt simpli simulanți. Medicii deținuți semnaleză caraliilor numeroase cazuri de simulare suspectate. Asupra fiecărei gamale se lasă, rea, privirea iscoditoare și invidioasă a celor dimprejur. Puținele medicamente distribuite câte unui bolnav sunt cântărite din ochi și cumintea mai exact decât ar face o balanță farmaceutică de precizie.¹²

Desigur, pentru părintele Steinhardt, cel care insistă asupra calității de boier a lui Dumnezeu¹³, încearcă să lupte cu efectele dezumanizante ale închisorii și sî învețe de acolo lucruri care îi sunt utile sufletului. Bun psiholog, e conștient că iertarea și împăcarea cu sine și asumarea suferinței, sunt aspecte esențiale în depășirea eventualelor traume pe care experiența carcerală le-ar putea avea:

Cred așa: că dacă din închisoare pleci și de pe urma suferinței te alegi cu dorințe de răzbunare și cu sentimente de acreală, închisoarea și suferințele au fost de haram. Iar dacă rezultatul e un complex de liniște și înțelegere și de scârbă față de orice silnicie și șemecherie, înseamnă că suferințele și închisoarea au fost spre folos și țin de căile nepătrunse pe care-i place Domnului a umbla.

Puterea de a iubi, la ieșirea din închisoare, trebuie să fi crescut în proporții de necrezut.

Balzac: dragostea care nu crește zi de zi este o patimă netrebnică.

Desigur că n-am suferit îndeajuns ca să am acele îngăduitoare maniere și acea tandrețe neclintită pe care le obținem numai după crunte înșelătorii și reiterate călcări în picioare.¹⁴

Acest mod de a vedea lucrurile, dar și capacitatea de a ierta și de a merge mai departe, au un rol de-a dreptul transformator în viața părintelui Nicolae. Ele vor influența și scrisul său ulterior și vor constitui mărturia vădită a calității sale umane aparte. În același mod se va comporta și Demostene Andronescu.

Fire poetică, însă cu formație de istoric, el va oferi o mărturie precisă, dedicată unui subiect insuficient reliefat anterior, al laturii întunecate a comunismului. Va vorbi despre reeducare. Au făcut-o și alții înaintea lui. Virgil Ierunca va atrage atenția asupra „feomenului

Pitești”¹⁵, în vreme ce alți scriitori vor oferi mărturiile propriilor experiențe sau vor dedica simpozioane, conferințe sau sinteze istoriografice acestei manifestări¹⁶. Însă acesta reprezintă doar un aspect, e drept cel al terorii prin durere și abjurare, în care torturile fizice erau cele care determinau apostazie de valorile genuine¹⁷, fiind acompaniat și de alte episoade, precum cel de la Suceava sau cel de la Aiud. Asupra celui din urmă se oprește domnul Demostene, întrucât a fost unul dintre cei care l-au trăit. Accentul a căzut aici nu atât pe tortura fizică, respectiv înfometare, bătaii regulate, nesomn sau alte elemente similare, ci pe cea psihică, pe dărâmarea unui adevărat sistem axiologic interior.

Diferită ca structură și conținut de lucrarea părintelui Nicolae Steinhardt, cea pe care o avem în vedere se axează pe prezentarea sistematică, în context și pe baza istoriografiei, a propriei testimonianțe și a celor povestite autorului de către alți oameni care au trecut prin experiențe similare. În plus, este acompaniată de către o bogată anexă documentară ce conține extrase din dosarele de Securitate ale autorului însuși (pp. 287-343).

Demostene Andronescu ține să arate cum s-a declanșat fenomenul, care au fost elementele care au stat la baza lui și să-l prezinte apoi prin intermediul unor studii de caz sau al unor analize prosopografice. Cu alte cuvinte, ține să prezinte cele întâmplate și în același timp să realizeze studii de caz, pornind de la chipurile celor care au luat parte la evenimente. Între personajele negative importante, se numără colonelul Crăciun. Caracterizarea lui conține nu doar referiri privitoare la profilul său fizic sau moral, ci și informații cu privire la tehnicile sale. De exemplu, autorul ține să sublinieze că:

Primul lucru pe care l-a făcut Crăciun, după instalarea sa în funcție, a fost reorganizarea deținuților pe celule. Dacă până atunci, repartizarea pe celule se făcea oarecum la întâmplare, după cum se nimerea, de data aceasta, formațiile de patru, cinci sau șase oameni ce urmau să viețuiască împreună, au fost cu grijă alcătuite, două criterii pe care noi nu le-am prea putut înțelege. S-a ținut cont, în această alcătuire, de alfabet, s-a ținut cont de vârstă, s-a ținut cont și de afinități sufletești, și de adversități. În orice caz, această nouă organizare a deținuților nu s-a făcut la întâmplare, ca altădată. Târziu, s-a observat încă un amănunt și anume că în fiecare celulă fusese introdus, pe cât a fost posibil, câte un „piteștean” (deținut care trecuse prin Pitești), nu neapărat ca turnător sau ca om al

administrației..., ci pentru că se miza pe faptul că, atunci când va fi declanșată reeducarea, aceștia vor fi primii care o vor accepta, influențându-i astfel și pe ceilalți.¹⁸

Teroarea și suspiciunea despre care vorbise și părintele Steinhardt¹⁹ vor ajunge, datorită acestui aspect, să devină elemente cotidiene și aici. Ulterior, pas cu pas, prin înființarea „cluburilor”, dar și prin uzul violenței, atunci când va fi necesar, căci ea a străbătut, ca un fir roșu, universul carceral românesc din comunism²⁰, s-a încercat distrugerea viselor și năzuințelor celor de aici, fără a se reuși însă transformarea lor în ființe despiritualizate, respectiv „dezumanizarea”²¹ lor. Demostene Andronescu ține să sublinieze acest fapt:

Aiud, sfârșitul deceniului șase al secolului trecut. Pe atunci, în această cumplită temniță se mai trăia încă “eroic”. Însă fără emfază și fără bravade inutile. “Pensionarii” de aici, după ani grei de claustrare și privațiuni de tot felul, ajunseseră la un echilibru sufletesc, la un soi de înțelepciune care era cu totul altceva decât resemnare. Se mai spera încă, se mai visa și, mai ales, se mai credea în puterea rugăciunii. Și încă ceva. Mulți dintre aceștia, mai ales dintre cei care intraseră de foarte tineri în temniță (unii dintre ei abia ieșiți din adolescență), se spiritualizaseră în așa măsură încât parcă nici trecerea timpului nu-i mai atingea²².

Zguduirea și tremurul sufletesc vor veni în Aiud, după cum am arătat, nu din pricina chinurilor la care vor fi supuși cei care treceau prin această experiență de reeducare, așa cum se întâmplase în Pitești²³, deși nici aici regimul nu era unul foarte plăcut, ci odată ce anumite personalități care constituiseră modele și stâlpi pentru cei tineri vor fi claca, pe fondul presiunilor psihologice și vor realiza ceea ce Securitatea definea generic drept „demascare”. Dat fiind faptul că o mare parte dintre cei de aici făcuseră parte din Mișcarea Legionară, aceasta va avea în centru tocmai abjurarea lor de la aceasta și principiile ei și îmbrățișarea unora exact opuse, cele comuniste. Autorul arată în mod concludiv, după o lungă expunere a acestui aspect că:

După cum se poate observa, toți cei aleși de Crăciun să-și facă, în fața noastră și a oficialităților locale, autodemascarea erau (cu excepția lui Parpalac, care nu constituia o figură așa de proeminentă, și poate a părintelui Stăniloae, care fusese doar simpatizant al Mișcării), personalități de frunte ale Mișcării

Legionare, iar unii dintre ei, prin verticalitatea și integritatea lor morală, precum și prin viața spirituală pe care o duseseră până atunci, fuseseră adevărate exemple de urmat pentru ceilalți deținuți. Din acest punct de vedere, figura cea mai proeminentă, devenită aproape legendă, era cea a lui Victor Biriș. Iată de ce căderea lor a zguduit, ca un seism de maximă magnitudine cunoștințele celor ce i-au ascultat atunci, în acea noapte de pomină, numită de unul dintre noi “noaptea ucigașilor de vise”,²⁴

Descrierea experiențelor carcerale culminează apoi cu cea a eliberării și a modului în care aceasta a contribuit la erodarea sufletească a unor oameni care rezistaseră eroic la Aiud²⁵, dat fiind faptul că, după ce crezurile lor fuseseră șubreze, mulți dintre foștii deținuți au trecut prin adevărate stări de sinucidere interioară, devenind, din lipsa altor posibilități, supuși regimului.

Experiența carcerală din timpul regimului comunist a reprezentat așadar, așa cum am arătat și noi, un fenomen complex. Valoarea testimonială a celor două texte pe care le-am avut în vedere, respectiv *Jurnalul fericirii* al părintelui Nicolae Steinhartd și cel dedicat reeducării de la Aiud de către Demostene Andronescu, este una aparte și este dublată de valoarea mistică sau cea istoriografică. Diversitatea stilistică, structurală, dar și de conținut a celor două opere vine să ilustreze perversitatea represiunii comuniste și dinamica ei. Dacă în închisori precum Jilava atmosfera era bazată pe anumite aspecte și avea în centru un anume tip de experiențe, la Gherla, accentele erau altele, iar la Aiud se miza pe cu totul alte principii și scopurile erau diferite. Analiza acestor texte se constituie într-o necesitate pentru societatea contemporană, pe care uitarea ar putea-o condamna la repetarea lor, iar cunoașterea vieții și activității unor oameni precum evocați, într-o nevoie acută a acestei lumi ce traversează o adevărată criză de modele.

În plus, înțelegerea mecanismelor psihologice ale torturii s-ar putea face pornind de la descrierile oferite de la autori precum cei de față, în timp ce, înțelegerea modului în care ei au perceput suferința și au descoperit dimensiunea sau valențele ei eliberatoare și l-au descoperit pe Dumnezeu în momente care nu erau nici pe departe cele mai fericite ale vieții lor, ar putea constitui subiecte de investigație deopotrivă pentru istorici, filologi, psihologi sau teologi. Vocația mistică a celor doi autori, exprimată în formulări filosofico-literare în cazul părintelui Steinhartd și poetice în cazul lui Demostene

Andronescu, e și ea un aspect extrem de important, care ar merita valorificat și prezentat în contextul mai larg al misticilor care au trecut pragul a ceea ce formează astăzi obiectul „turismului întunecat”, ieșind fortificați de acolo, pierzându-și viața pentru a sluji drept model altora sau pecetluindu-și vocația prin mărturisirea credinței cu prețul vieții lor.

NOTES:

¹ Aleksandr Isaevič Solženicyn, *Arhipelagul Gulag (1918-1956) – încercare de investigație literară*, vol. 1-3, trad. Ivan Kovaci, Nicolae Iliescu, col. „Cotidianul”, Editura Univers, București, 2008; Idem, *Ca bobul între pietrele de moară*, trad. Nicolae Vrubleșchi, col. „Memorii-Jurnale”, Editura Humanitas, București, 2006; Idem, *Vițelul și stejarul*, vol. 1, trad. Ion și Maria Nastasia, col. „Memorii-Jurnale”, Editura Humanitas, București, 2002; Idem, *Vițelul și stejarul*, vol. 2, trad. Ion și Maria Nastasia, col. „Memorii-Jurnale”, Editura Humanitas, București, 2002.

² Precum: Alexei et Valentina, Losev, „*La Joie pour l'éternité*”. *Correspondance du Goulag (1931-1933)*, trad. Luba Jurgenson, Editions des Syrtes, Genève, 2014.

³ Cf. Moise Iorgovan, *Sfântul închisorilor – mărturii despre Valeriu Gafencu*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2007. Cf. Danion Vasile (coord.), *Din temnițe spre sinaxare*, Editura Egumenița, Galați, 2008.

⁴ Care îmbogățește astăzi peisajul cultural românesc. A se vedea, de exemplu: Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, *Memorii*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2008; Paul Goma, *Jurnal*, vol. 1 – „Jurnal pe sărite”, col. „Purgatoriu”, Editura Nemira, București, 1997; Idem, *Jurnal*, vol. 2 – „Jurnal de căldură mare”, col. „Purgatoriu”, Editura Nemira, București, 1997; Idem, *Jurnal*, vol. 3 – „Jurnal de noapte lungă”, Editura Nemira, București, 1997; Idem, *Jurnal*, vol. 4 – „Alte jurnale”, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1998; Idem, *Jurnal*, vol. 5 – „Jurnalul unui jurnal”, col. „Remember”, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1998; Idem, *Jurnal*, vol. 6 – „Jurnal de apocrif...”, col. „Remember”, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1999; Idem, *Jurnal – 2007*, Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu Lăpuș, 2010; Valeriu Anania, *Memorii*; Idem, *De dincolo de ape: pagini de jurnal și alte texte*, col. „Remember”, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2000; Idem, *Rotonda plopilor aprinși*, Editura Cartea Românească, București, 1983; Ion Caraion, *Jurnal – literatura și*

contraliteratura, Editura Cartea Românească, București, 1980; Constantin Argetoianu, *Însemnări zilnice*, vol. 1-4, ed. Stelian Neagoe, Editura Machiavelli, București, 1998-2009; Idem, *Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri*, col. „Memorii – Jurnale”, Editura Humanitas, București, 1991; Aspazia Oțel Petrescu, *Cu Hristos în celulă*, ediția a 2-a, Editura Areopag, București, 2012; Nicole-Valery Grossu, *Bénie sois-tu, prison*, Les Editions du Plon, Paris, 1978; Lena Constante, *Evadarea imposibilă – penitenciarul politic de femei, Miercurea Ciuc (1957-1961)*, ediția a 2-a, Editura Florile Dalbe, București, 1996; Idem, *Evadarea tăcută – 3000 de zile singură în închisorile din România*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1992; Galina Răduleanum, *Repetiție la moarte*, col. „Din spatele gratiilor”, Editura Fundației Sfinții Închisorilor, Pitești, 2013; Nichifor Nichifor, *Memorii*, vol. 2 – „Pribeag în țara mea – răspuns la actul meu de acuzare – mărturii din închisoare”, editor Alexandru Condeescu, Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române, București, 1996; Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, *Cuvinte vii – „a sluji lui Hristos înseamnă suferință!”*, Editura Bonifaciu, Bacău, 2009; ***, *Viața Părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după mărturiile sale și ale altora*, ediție îngrijită la Mănăstirea Diaconești, Editura Christiana, București, 2007; Ioan Ianolide, *Întoarcerea la Hristos – document pentru o lume nouă*, ediția a II-a, Editura Bonifaciu, București, 2012; Idem, *Deținutul profet*, ediție îngrijită de Mănăstirea Diaconești, Editura Bonifaciu, București, 2009; Aurel State, *Drumul crucii. Amintiri de pe front și din Gulaguri*, Editura Rost, Editura Fundației Închisorilor, Pitești, București, 2013; Nicolae Purcărea, *Urlă haita... – Pitești, Canal, Gherla, Jilava, Aiud*, Fundația Sfinții Închisorilor, București, 2012.

⁵ Descrisă de Mitropolitul Bartolomeu Anania, el însuși supraviețuitor al acestuia astfel: „Să știți că dacă regimul comunist a încercat o armă împotriva distrugerii omului, nu a fost distrugerea fizică – în afară de lagărele de exterminare și de lupta de clasă -, ci eroziunea sau distrugerea lui morală. De aici lupta împotriva religiei și lupta împotriva culturii, cele două valori interioare ale omului.

În închisoare oamenii se salvau prin aceste două bunuri: prin religie, exprimată prin credință și rugăciune, și prin cultură. Dar pentru aceasta îți trebuie niște instrumente minime. În închisoare se învăța teologie, trebuie să știți că marii noștri teologi, părintele Stăniloae, marele profesor Teodor Popescu și mulți alții, patronau adevărate catedre de teologie în celele prin care treceau. Se învăța de la ei teologie, rugăciuni, modalitatea de a spune o rugăciune și de a o trăi. În condiția aceasta de detenție, nu se mai pune problema locului unde te rogi, pentru că nu ai decât celula și colțul celulei, dar era singura zonă în care administrația nu te putea controla. Te controla asupra mâncării, te controla asupra somnului, asupra ținutei, asupra frigului.

Nu putea să-ți controleze gândurile sau eul interior”. Mitropolitul Bartolomeu Anania, *Rugăciunea – izvor de putere în încercările vieții*, col. „Liman duhovnicesc”, vol. 4, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2013, p. 27-28.

⁶ Autor al unor lucrări precum: N. Steinhardt, *Dăruind vei dobândi*, Editura Mănăstirii Rohia, Rohia, 2006; Idem, *Jurnalul fericirii*, Editura Mănăstirii Rohia, Rohia, 2005; Idem, *Călătoria unui fiu risipitor – roman*, ed. Ioan Pinte, Editura Adonai, București, 1995; Idem, *Critică la persoana I*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001; Idem, *Eu însumi și alți câțiva (eseuri noi și vechi)*, ed. Ioan Pinte, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001; Idem, *În genul... tinerilor*, Editura Cultura Poporului, București, 1934; Idem, *Între viață și cărți*, Editura Cartea Românească, București, 1976; Idem, *Ispita lecturii*, ed. Ioan Pinte, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2000; Idem, *Monologul polifonic*, ed. Virgil Bulat, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1991; Idem, *Cartea împărtășirii*, ed. Ion Vârtic, Editura Biblioteca Apostrof, Cluj-Napoca, 1998; Idem, *Cuvinte de credință*, ediție definitivă îngrijită de Ioan Pinte, Editura Humanitas, București, 2006; Idem, *Drumul către isihie – inedite, eseuri*, ed. Oana Cătina, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1999; Idem, *Dumnezeu în care spui că nu crezi... Scrisori către Virgil Ierunca (1967-1983)*, ed. Monica Manu, Editura Humanitas, București, 2000; Idem, *Escale în timp și spațiu sau dincoace și dincolo de texte*, Editura Cartea Românească, București, 1987.

⁷ Pentru mai multe informații cu privire la viața și activitatea lui: Cleopa Paraschiv, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus – unirea minții cu inima și a omului cu Dumnezeu – îndrumător duhovnicesc*, col. „Rugul aprins”, Editura Agaton, Făgăraș, 2002; Ioan Dură, *Monahismul românesc în anii 1948-1989 – mărturiile ale românilor și considerații privitoare la acestea*, col. „Mărturiile”, Editura Harisma, București, 1994; Mina Dobzeu, *Apocalipsa – planul de salvare a lumii în 7 etape*, Editura Agaton, Făgăraș, 2011; Idem, *Bucuria duhonicului*, Editura Axa, Botoșani, 2005; Idem, *Pentru o biserică dinamică*, Editura Bunavestire, Bacău, 2001; Idem, *Rugăciunea inimii pentru toți*, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 2003; Idem, *Rugăciunea inimii și roadele ei*, Editura Agaton, Făgăraș, 2012; Iurie Roșca, *Părintele Mina Dobzeu, botezătorul lui Nicolae Steinhardt*, „Prag-3”, Chișinău, 1997. Cu privire la botezul părintelui Nicolae Steinhardt: Idem, *Amintiri despre N. Steinhardt*, Editura Lucretius, București, 2002.

⁸ Demostene Andronescu, *Reeducarea de la Aiud – Peisaj lăuntric – memorii și versuri din închisoare*, col. „Cruciații secolului XX”, Editura Christiana, București, 2009.

⁹ Maxim (Iuliu-Marius) Morariu, *Repere ale autobiografiei spirituale din spațiul ortodox în secolele XIX-XX: Ioan de Kronstadt, Siluan Athonitul și Nicolae Berdiaev*, Editura Lumen, Iași, 2019, p. 71.

¹⁰ „Primul grup e al nostru, al deținuților din boxă, douăzeci și cinci la număr, îngrămădiți pe bănci, privind drept înainte (iarăși nu avem voie să ne uităm altundeva, și mai ales nu unul la altul), înconjurați – asemenea orbitelor electronice din periferia nucleului atomic – de un cerc de ostași în termen, toți echipați ca de front, cu puști mitraliere automate pe care le țin îndreptate asupra-ne, dându-și silința să se holbeze fioros. Sala e posacă, tonalitățile închise, totul e straniu, dar prezența soldaților – postăți în poziție de tragere, ca și cum ar păzi banda lui Terente, a lui Coroiu, a lui Brandabura sau a lui Zdrelea napirosu, ba și prinsă asura faptului în puterea nopții ș-n inima codrului ori în desișul stugărișului, iar nu un pâlce de intelectuali palizi, scofâlciți, înțoliți în veșminte călcate de circumstanță cu fierul spălătoriei de la Securitate, oboșiți, nedormiți, încercănați, mulți trecuți de amiaza vieții, mai toți înzestrați cu câte o boală de sedentar, de locuitor al marilor orașe: colită, rinită, constipație, tuberculoză, calculi biliari – pare o greșeală de regie, o exagerare cu nuanță de ridicol”. N. Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericirii*, p. 73.

¹¹ Cf.: Monica Lovinescu, *Jurnal esențial*, ed. Cristina Cioabă, col. „Zeitgeist”, Editura Humanitas, București, 2010, p. 25-26; Idem, *Jurnal (1981-1984)*, ediția a II-a revăzută, col. „Memorii – jurnale – convirbiri”, Editura Humanitas, București, 2003, p. 23.

¹² N. Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericirii*, p. 104-105.

¹³ N. Steinhardt, *Dăruind vei dobândi*, p. 170. Cf. Mitropolitul Bartolomeu Anania, *Rugăciunea – izvor de putere în încercările vieții*, p. 65.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 270.

¹⁵ Virgil Ierunca, *Fenomenul Pitești*, ediția a III-a, Editura Humanitas, București, 2007.

¹⁶ A se vedea: Dumitru Bacu, *Pitești. Centru de reeducare studențească*, Editura Cuvântul Românesc, Hamilton, 1989; Costin Merișca, *Tragedia din Pitești. O cronică a „reeducării” din închisorile comuniste*, Institutul European, Iași, 1997; Gheorghe Andreica, *Reeducările comuniste. Volumul I – Eugen Țurcanu, rușinea speciei umane*, Editura Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2007; Grigore Dumitrescu, *Demascarea*, Jon Dumitru Verlag and Mediana Edit, Munchen-București, 1996; ¹⁶ *** , *Memorialul ororii. Documente ale procesului reeducării din închisorile Pitești*, Gherla, Editura Vreimea, București, 1995; Cosmin Budeancă (coord.), *Experiențe carcerale în România comunistă*, vol. I, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2007; Dumitru Lăcătușu, Alin Mureșan, *Casa terorii – documente privind penitenciarul Pitești (1947-1977)*, Editura Polirom, Iași și București, 2009; Precum: Ilie Popa (coord.), *„Experimentul Pitești”. Conference Proceedings. Comunicări prezentate la Simpozionul „Experimentul Pitești” – Reeducarea prin tortură*, ed. I, Pitești, 6-8 Dec. 2001. *Opresiunea țărănime române în timpul dictaturii comuniste*,

ediția a III-a, Pitești, 26-28 septembrie 2003, Editura Fundația Culturală Memoria, Pitești, 2004; Mihai Buracu, *Eu sunt scribul... Amintiri și poezii din detenție*, ed. Alin Mureșan, Editura Filos, Mioveni, 2012; Alin Mureșan, *Pitești – cronica unei sinucideri asistate*, ediția a III-a, Editura Manuscris, Pitești, 2017.

¹⁷ După cum ține să sublinieze și părintele Calciu, el însuși un supraviețuitor al acestei experiențe: „A venit însă Mihai Scutaru, care stătuse cu noi în celulă și cu care eram bun prieten. Bineînțeles, l-am primit în pat cu mine – că dormeam doi pe un pat – și trei nopți băiatul ăsta n-a închis un ochi! Trei nopți! Îl vedeam cu se întoarce de pe o parte pe alta și tot timpul ofta. Și după trei nopți, mi-a spus ce s-a întâmplat. Mi-a povestit tot ce se putea povesti. Noaptea, pe șoptite, pe sub pătură. Spunea că acolo n-ai nici o posibilitate să rezști, că e bine să spui tot ceea ce ști că știu și alții. „Nici să nu te gândești că vei putea să rezști, că vei putea să...” ***”, *Viața Părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după mărturiile sale și ale altora*, p. 51.

¹⁸ Demostene Andronescu, *Reeducarea de la Aiud. O radiografie memorialistică*, p. 57-58.

¹⁹ N. Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericirii*, p. 104-105.

²⁰ Florin Constantin Pavlovici, *Tortura pe înțelesul tuturor*, Col. „Rotonda. Memorii”, Editura Cartier, Chișinău, 2001, p. 63.

²¹ Mitropolitul Bartolomeu Anania, *Rugăciunea – izvor de putere în încercările vieții*, p. 28.

²² Demostene Andronescu, *Reeducarea de la Aiud. O radiografie memorialistică*, Editura Manuscris, Pitești, 2018, p. 71.

²³ *** , *Viața Părintelui Gheorghe Calciu după mărturiile sale și ale altora*, p. 59. La rândul lui, Ioan Ianolide mărturisește că: „S-au practicat toate sistemele de tortură. Bătaia cea mai obișnuită era cu pumnii și ciomagul. Bătăușii ajunseseră mari maeștri în lovituri date la cele mai vulnerabile părți ale organismului. Sângele care curgea îi întăra și mai mult”. Ioan Ianolide, *Întoarcerea la Hristos – document pentru o lume nouă*, p. 93.

²⁴ Demostene Andronescu, *Reeducarea de la Aiud. O radiografie memorialistică*, p. 129-130.

²⁵ „Mișcarea de rezistență din România nu a fost înfrântă atunci când membrii ei au umplut temnițele, ci mult mai târziu, în 1964, când aceștia, nu din „mărinimie” împilătorilor, ci datorită conjuncturii politice internaționale, au fost puși în „libertate”.

Pentru că opresiunea revigorează și întărește, regimul inuman la care au fost supuși cei din închisori le-a sporit acestora îndărmirea și le-a întărit credința că dreptatea este de partea lor. Pierzându-și o „libertate” iluzorie, mulți au dobândit, între zidurile temnițelor și în lanțuri, adevărata libertate, care le-a dat tăria să continue, pe alte planuri și cu alte mijloace, lupta împotriva prigonitorilor. De data aceasta, însă, lupta lor era dusă în spirit – și spiritul nu poate fi învins de forța brută”. *Ibidem*, p. 275.

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