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„IMPERIAL LEGACY AND BALKAN NEUROSIS”. FEDERALIST PROJECTS, ROMANIAN REACTIONS

KEY WORDS: imperial legacy, federalist projects, Mitteleuropa, „Pan-Romanism”, „Austro-Romanism”, „Bukovinism”, protochronism

SŁOWA KLUCZE: dziedzictwo imperialne, projekty federalistyczne, Mitteleuropa, „panrumunizm”, „austorumunizm”, „bukowinizm”, protocronism

Abstract

I am going to speak about federative projects and plans, political initiatives and memoranda, reactions they caused in the Romanian intellectual and political environment, the way they were (or rather were not) included in the historical discourse, and will not tackle the “Central European set of mind” which is so difficult to identify.

It has to be mentioned that, for the Romanian culture, the acquisition of the Central European conscience, the conscience of the *middle* and its potential conceptualization are doomed to annihilation by the obsessive claim of “insularity”. The imperial legacy is only mentioned in negative contexts, various political and cultural personalities are incriminated for their cosmopolitanism, and for the “pro-Hapsburg”, “pro-German” activity which is equal to being “antinational”. Central Europe becomes a spectre, a bogey man shown every now and then to Romanians in order to reinforce the feeling of being “under siege”, the fear that the country could be dismembered by the “enemies from abroad and enemies within”.

Prologue

I want to start by explaining that I consider “Central Europe” an “umbrella” term attempting to explain various, often contradictory geo-political and cultural projects spreading over the same or along successive time periods. Some of the examples include those relating to the federalisation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (from the Czech Frantisek Palacki to the Romanian A.C. Popovici) and *Mitteleuropa* (Fr. Naumann), the French plan for the “Danube Federation”, Aristide Briand’s “Memorandum” and, as the extension of these, Coudenhove-Kalergi’s “Pan-Europa”. Without

applying the Jacques Le Rider “semantic archaeology”, or commenting on the “variable geometry” of the Central-European space (a leitmotif in numerous essays), I am going to choose a simpler way of direct naming within a specific historical context.

It has to be mentioned that, for Romanian culture, the acquisition of the Central European conscience of the *middle* and its potential conceptualization are doomed to annihilation by the obsessive claim of “insularity”. Although Romanian identity is based on the idea that throughout the Middle Ages Romanians represented a “protection wall for Christendom” (just like the Hungarians, Poles and other Slavs¹), the position of the Romanian Principalities “between the East and the West” had until the end of the 20th century been a relatively late and not very much discussed topic². From Școala Ardeleană, through intellectuals of the 19th century³, and until the start of the First World War, the Latin character of the Romanian language acquired a militant dimension. It was invested with a type of guarantee that Romanian culture was part of the Western culture. The phrase “an island of Latinity on the Slavic sea” was used over and over again in history books, literary histories, various essays, journals as well as school books. Its reiteration induced a kind of superiority complex (a counterpart to the traditional self-stigmatization) which made any attempt at exploring and understanding one’s neighbours simply superfluous. The postulated “insularity” allowed the local intelligentsia to transform Romania into a sort of foreign body in the region, excluding it *a priori* from any kind of regional, Central European configuration. How could Romania join the Slav project of the Central Europe or *Mittleuropa*, without abandoning its claimed uniqueness and isolation? Thus, there were no attempts at articulating a political or intellectual project for Central Europe as an area (within specified borders), which would also include territories inhabited by the Romanians. Instead, the geopolitical and cultural Bovarism had developed, where France was seen (despite its true location) as a protecting “neighbour”. The Principalities, and later Romania, thus outlined the imaginary borders, aspiring to the impossible – a transposition to the West.

After the establishment of the communist regime, the Soviet system failed to establish valid links between Romania and the Slavic world, while the Latin West (due to the capitalist system) was rejected and condemned. Ceausescu’s national-communism changed Romanian “insularity” into the governing principle of the country and imposed (with the obvious differences from the Vintilă Brătianu national-liberalism from between the wars⁴) an “exclusively by our own means” development.

¹ See J. Tazbir, *Polonia, meterez al creștinătății: nașterea și înflorirea*; S. Csernus, *Ungaria, meterez al creștinătății: nașterea și înflorirea unei misiuni colective*; J. Isaievici, *Mitologia slavă* [in:] Ch. Delsol, M. Maslowski, J. Nowicki, *Mituri și simboluri politice în Europa Centrală*, transl. from the French by L. Papuc, Editura Cartier, Chișinău 2003.

² See N. Djuvara, *Les pays roumains entre Orient et Occident. Les Principautés danubiennes au début du XIXe siècle*, Publications Orientalistes de France, 1989.

³ See K. Jurczak, *Dylematy zmiany. Pisarze rumuńscy XIX wieku wobec ideologii zachowawczej*, Kraków 2011.

⁴ V.I.C. Brătianu, *Scriseri și cuvântări*, vol. I, Imprimeriile „Independența”, București 1937, p. 217–219. Articolul intitulat „Prin noi înșine” a fost publicat la 3/16 mai 1905 în „Voința Națională”, oficiul PNL, nr 6006.

I am going to speak about federal projects and plans, political initiatives and memoranda, and some of the reactions they caused in the Romanian intellectual and political environment, the way they were (or rather were not) included in the historical discourse. In my essay I will not consider the “Central European set of mind” which is so difficult to identify. The reason is that, first of all, I share Krzysztof Pomian’s scepticism, not to treat the notion of Central Europe as a very “powerful idea” for the states in the region⁵. Secondly, because even *Mitteleuropa* by Jaques Le Rider, a very well informed researcher in the field, claims that the literature produced by the authors from the “peripheral centres” of German language, mainly of Jewish origin, provide the most precious testimony of the “mitteleuropean” spirit⁶. Or else, there is a huge distance between the fictional world of multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic harmony and order, of a superior civilisation of tolerance... and the image of a middle Europe as the place of most fierce chauvinism and anti-Semitism (Ludwig Gumpowicz), of political “hysterics” of “small states”, “the miseries of territorial disputes”, “the disregard of values”, and national “vanities” equalled only by political irresponsibility. (István Bibó⁷). How can I define, therefore, the “Central European” *Zeitgeist*⁸? I considered Karl Schorske’s approach more appropriate, as he defined it in the 1970s by denouncing the temptation to premise it on an intuitively determined, common denominator and following, first of all, the empirical analysis of multiple and contradictory manifestations⁹.

“Pan-Romanism”, “Austro-Romanism”, “Bukovinism”. Dilemmas and delimitations

After the defeat of “The Spring of Nations”, Wallachian revolutionaries in exile started an intense propaganda for the cause of the Principalities¹⁰. They were attracted by various federal plans, portraying “oriental Belgium” (D. Brătianu) under the Turkish suzerainty, the “Danube federation” (N. Bălcescu) or a union from the “Baltic to the Black Sea”, under the German authority (I. Maiorescu). Many were seduced by the ide-

⁵ K. Pomian, *L’Europe centrale: essais de définition*, „Revue germanique internationale” 1994, nr 1.

⁶ J. Le Rider, *Mitteleuropa*, transl. by A. Opric, Iași 1997, p. 105 and the following.

⁷ I. Bibó, *Misère des Petits Etats d’Europe de l’Est*, transl. from Hungarian by G. Kassai, L’Harmattan, 1996.

⁸ V. Nemoianu establishes a “Central-European ethos”, opposed to the “protestant work ethos”, based on “accumulation of knowledge and on the communal acknowledgement of the importance of instruction”, in *The Case of the Central European Ethos* [in:] *România și liberalismele ei*, București 2000, p. 182–221. On the other hand, as shown by various researchers, among whom Irina Livezeanu, more than 45% of the population in Bukovina was illiterate. The discussion is still open.

⁹ K. Schorske, *Viena fin-de siècle. Politică și cultură*, transl. by C.I. Doroholschi, I. Ploșteanu, Iași 1998, p. 20–22.

¹⁰ N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor. Volumul IX, Unificatorii*, București 1938, p. 224–225. Moldavian revolutionaries will take almost no part in such actions in exile.

as of Giuseppe Mazzini (“Young Europe”)¹¹, as well as by those promoted by the active Polish emigration around Prince Czartoryski¹², and they embraced federalism hoping to recreate the “old Dacia” by a unification of all the provinces inhabited by Romanians.

On the other hand, Romanian intellectuals and politicians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire considered the Wallachian “Pan-Romanian” plans (which presumed a simultaneous war against Turkey, Russia and Austria with no army available) as simply phantasmagorical. In 1848, they restated their loyalty to the Emperor¹³ and focused on obtaining rights equal to the other nationalities in the Empire¹⁴. In February 1849, after the abdication of Ferdinand V, Andrei Șaguna presented Franz Joseph with a memorandum (signed by the representatives of Romanians in Transylvania, Bukovina and Banat), asking for the Romanian regions to be united within the Empire as an autonomous Great Duchy governed by the Emperor. In April of the same year, together with the Croat and Slovak leaders, he signed a petition for the federalization of the Hapsburg Empire. In spite of the Transylvanian myth of the “good emperor” expressing utmost care for his subjects, the memorandum had been left unanswered. However, this initiative can be remembered as the first assertion of the “Austro-Romanism”. N. Iorga observed that Andrei Șaguna only supported the “re-organization of some “Transylvanian” nations under the restored Hapsburg absolutism. The Nations, however, were meant to collaborate like brothers, beyond strictly national goals”¹⁵. Thus, Șaguna became one of the first people to draw the map of the “Great Austria”¹⁶.

After the Romanian Principalities united in 1859, and particularly after the establishment of the Romanian Kingdom in 1881, the distance between the vision of intellectuals and politicians in Transylvania and Bukovina (focused on Viennese circles) and that of the Unionists (who were trying to propose Bucharest as the new centre) increased. At its beginning, the Romanian historiography, represented by Mihail Kogălniceanu and Nicolae Bălcescu gradually built the myth of national unity, endowing it with a mystical dimension, as a fulfilment of providential national destiny. And this type of period-specific romantic discourse influenced by Herder became a general and overwhelming perception/belief, leaving no room for an articulate alternative. Even before the 1918 unification, and prior to of political action and reforms for establishing the centralised state in Bucharest, which resulted in the

¹¹ P.S. Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom. A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Tailor&Francis e-Library, London–New York 2005, p. 124–125.

¹² See P.P. Panaitescu, *Emigrația polonă. Revoluția română de la 1848*, București 1929; L. Boicu, *Emigrația polonă și Țările Române în vremea revoluției din 1848–1849* (I, II) [in:] *Scieri istorice alese*, Iași 2011, p. 334–391.

¹³ Even Nicolae Bălcescu sadly notes, in *Mișcarea românilor din Ardeal la 1848*, that Romanians did fight at 1848 under Austrian colour “[...] the most infamous, atrocious and obsolete despotism”.

¹⁴ G. Ciorănescu, *Români și ideea federalistă*, G.P. Filitti (ed.), București 1996, p. 58. See also L. Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București 1997, p. 146–147.

¹⁵ N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor. Volumul IX, Unificatorii*, București 2010, p. 189.

¹⁶ See K. Hitchins, h, *Ortodoxie și Naționalitate. Andrei Șaguna și Romanii din Transilvania, 1846–1873*, transl. by A. Jivi, București 1995.

detriment of provincial autonomies¹⁷, there was a tension between the “unionist” discourse and the voices of those who, claiming their Transylvanian-Hapsburg identity, proposed the development of Romanian-inhabited provinces within the federalised empire. One example is the pro-German Titu Maiorescu, a mentor of “Junimea” and one of the leaders of the Romanian Conservative Party. His father, a Transylvanian Ioan Maiorescu, had supported some of the conservative ideas in 1848, however, for Titu any of these notions they were “monstrous”, and unacceptable for the 19th century Romanian.

The 1892 “Memorandum” addressed to the Emperor was asking for equal political and ethnic rights for Romanians. The trial of the memorandum signatories followed and in consequence, the public conscience imposed the idea – present in most of the 20th century historical and journalistic contributions – that, after 1867, all Romanians opposed Hungary as well as Austro-Hungary. Any other option seemed unconceivable. However, the political life was much more complicated. It was marked by confrontations between the governing parliament representatives, dedicated to the idea of integrating Romanians with the dual state, and the nationalist representatives. Some of the “speeches of Romanian representatives” in the Hungarian Diet at Pesta presented the view that several legalist Romanian delegates held “the interests of our common motherland” above the “claims of the nationalities”¹⁸.

In 1892, in *Românii în regatul ungar și politica maghiară*¹⁹, the author, Ioan Slavici appreciated the improvement in Romanian – Austro-Hungarian relations, considering that the agreement signed in 1883 created an opportunity to solve the Romanian-Hungarian conflict by dialogue. Together with the other intellectuals in the *Tribuna* circle (whose programme stipulated “the traditional allegiance to the Throne and observance of the laws”); he condemned irredentism, anti-dynasty and any kind of anti-Austrian manifestations. In 1911, the writer (although he had been imprisoned for his convictions) did not change his position. In a leaflet entitled *Zbuciumările politice la românii din Ungaria*, he was reticent to the unionist propaganda in the Kingdom of Romania, the declarations (like those of N. Iorga in the Kingdom, made in good faith, but perhaps too easily) which provoked and fed disputes between Romanians of different political allegiances, as well as Romanians and Hungarians, and justified suspicions of the authorities. He pleaded for political realism, and fulfilment of “common interests”, not just those of Romanian nationals. He wanted a rational compromise, the institution of a *modus vivendi* that should have been bearable for both *the* Romanians and Hungarians: “It is common sense that we should all give in

¹⁷ See I. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Nationalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle (1918–1930)*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1995.

¹⁸ See T.V. Păcățian, *Cartea de aur sau Luptele politice-naționale ale românilor de sub Coroana ungară*, Sibiu 1906, vol. IV; 1909, vol. V. For example, during the 29 November 1869 session, representative George Ivacicovici declared, against an initiative of the Serbian and Romanian representatives: “[...] here we are not national representatives, we are the representatives of the country”. And Simeon Papp reinforced the former’s statement: “[...] I always place the interests of the country above the claims of nationalities” (vol. IV, p. 773).

¹⁹ I. Slavici, *Românii în regatul ungar și politica maghiară*, București 1892.

and support those who still think that Romanians can achieve freedom of development even within the present Hungarian state”²⁰. In the foreword to his 1915 collection of articles, *Politica națională română. Articoli scriși dela 1871 până la 1881*²¹, the author emphasized that “it is in the nature of the thing”, that Romanians in Transylvania can only be “fierce enemies to all the Emperor’s enemies and to the enemies of the Emperor’s house”. They are not, the author insisted, against *all* Hungarians, but only against those who undermine the Empire and its laws.

In 1906, Aurel C. Popovici proposed in *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich* the transformation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire into a federation of 15 states, based on the ethnic, and not historical criterion, with the appointment of specific governing bodies²². Obviously, his ideas were not new, they had previously been advanced by Frantisek Palacki, a supporter of Austro-Slavism”, by Franz Schuselka (who saw Austria transformed into a *Völkerreich*), by Johann Caspar Bluntschli (who, in 1878 came with a project to organize a society of European states based on the federal experience of Switzerland) as well as foreshadowed by Andrei Șaguna’s project for a Grand Duchy of the Romanians. A.C. Popovici’s intention was first of all to gain the Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s support for the federalist idea, considered the only solution for saving the empire and solving the problem of the nationalities. Its volume, inspired by the USA Constitution and Swiss constitutional formula – enough known not to need any detailed presentation here²³ – circulated in the political circles of the time. It had even reached the Belvedere circle, but failed to provoke the enthusiasm its author had hoped for²⁴. In spite of some success of the book, the federalist project of the “United States of Greater Austria” did not gain support from any Transylvanian political party, nor was it supported by the leaders of the national movement.

A.C. Popovici was critical of the Austro-Hungarian dualism, the hungarisation policies of the authorities in Budapest, but also of the “selfishness of nation-

²⁰ I. Slavici, *Zbuciumările politice la românii din Ungaria*, „Minerva”, Institut de arte grafice și Editură, București 1911, p. 7 and the following.

²¹ I. Slavici, *Politica națională română. Articoli scriși dela 1871 până la 1881*, Editura Autorului, București 1915, p. 6 and the following.

²² A.C. Popovici, *Stat și națiune. Statele Unite ale Austriei-Mari*, transl. from the German by P. Pandrea, introduction and notes by C. Schifirneț, București 1997.

²³ *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich* was to include: German Austria: German regions of Austria, the German area at the Hungarian western border, German regions in south-eastern Bohemia and the south of Moravia; German Bohemia: the north-western part of Bohemia and the Tratenau region; German Moravia (Silesia): all of German Silesia and the Schönhengst region; Bohemia: the Czech part of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia; Slovakia; Western Galicia: the region inhabited by Poles; Eastern Galicia: the Ruteni part, including the Ruteni areas in Hungary and Bukovina; Hungary; Szekely land; Trentino; Trieste; Carniola; Croatia: with Dalmatia, the Croat islands, Istria, Fiume and Mur island; Vojvodina: the Serbian part in South Hungary; Transylvania.

²⁴ Baron Beck was to write to Vaida-Voevod (as he had been asked to send A.C. Popovici’s book to the archduke), “Yes, the book is lively written, well-documented, logical, but public opinion even within the monarchy, not to mention abroad, could have no understanding of such a solution” [in:] L. Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod între Belvedere și Versailles (însemnări, memorii, scrisori)*, Editura Sincron, București 1993, p. 97.

al points of view” and thus rejected the confusion created by the claim for historical rights. There is only one serious political way” – the author concluded – “for finally solving all these issues, both from the point of view of the imperial power and from the point of view of nationalities, including Germans. The way was to introduce federalism throughout the empire, based on national delimitations in their ethnographic borders”²⁵. However, the Romanian journals in Transylvania commented on the plan for the federalisation of the empire, as being a kind of intellectual utopia, difficult to achieve²⁶. Some Transylvanians (like Vasile Goldiș) completely discarded the idea of the “Great Austria”, rejecting the notion of any other way to create the Romanian spatial identity within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, but to become a union. Within the Romanian Kingdom, Popovici’s book enjoyed a limited, although respectful success. Constantin Stere (in a 1906 commentary in the *Viața Românească* journal) saw it as a “desperate formula” meant to ensure national rights for Romanians within the empire. Separating himself from the “cause of new Austrianism”, the historian Nicolae Iorga appreciated the polemic tone, the richness of information, but denounced the “weak ideology” of the book²⁷. Both Hungarian and Romanian journals claimed that the “Austro-Romanist” model proposed by A.C. Popovici is considered only a pretext for achieving the “unity of all Romanians” (the view from Bucharest) and for breaking the Dual Monarchy (the view from Budapest)²⁸.

Although he did not propose his own programme, but supported that of A.C. Popovici, we can consider that, in his political activity up to 1918, and his journalism (in *Lupta*), as well as functioning within his relations in the Viennese circles, Vaida-Voevod became the most important advocate of the “Austro-Romanism” in Transylvania. As we find out from his notes and letters (published after 1990), Vaida-Voevod managed to make contact with close friends of the archduke heir, and the archduke himself, to make it possible for the most important representatives of the Transylvanian intelligentsia to be given a listening ear at the Belvedere. He also kept in contact with Bukovina, looking for political and diplomatic means of making Popovici’s federalist plan more than a dream on paper. In 1919, Vaida-Voevod led the Romanian delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris during extremely complex diplomatic negotiations. After 1918, he became a minister and prime-minister of the Great Romania. Within the context of Romanian political wars, Vaida-Voevod came under attack from his political adversaries, who had started from blaming his “Austrianism” and his loyalty to the Hapsburg dynasty and went as far as accusing him of “national treason”. Without seeing Vaida-Voevod as some immaculate figure²⁹ of local politics,

²⁵ A.C. Popovici, *Stat și națiune...*, p. 107.

²⁶ S. Fati, *Transilvania, o provincie în căutarea unui centru, Centru și periferie în discursul politic al elitelor din Transilvania, 1892–1918*, Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, Cluj 2007, p. 123–124.

²⁷ N. Iorga, *Histoire des roumains et de la romanité orientale*, București 1945, p. 355–356.

²⁸ L. Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. Între Belvedere și Versailles...*, p. 52.

²⁹ Const. Graur has a “Post scriptum” to his book, to note “the painful surprise” caused by Vaida-Voevod, his transformation into a supporter of *numerus clausus*, *numerus valahicus*, in a propagandist of chauvinist ideas (in *Cu privire la Franz Ferdinand*, Editura „Adeverul”, 1935, p. 535–557).

the vileness of the accusative articles, their ferocity and ways of condemning the pre-Dual Monarchy federalist vision as anti-Romanian can help us understand that the “Hapsburg legacy” stood no chance to be accepted in the Great Romania. In 1928, the historian Silviu Dragomir published three articles in *Țara noastră*, which were aimed against Vaida-Voevod³⁰, denouncing, among other things, his “Hapsburg” identity. In a 1932 leaflet³¹, another historian, Ion Lupaș, condemns Vaida-Voevod’s relations with cu Berlin and Vienna as suspect of anti-Romanism. The mentor of traditionalist journal *Gândirea*, N. Crainic, and other less important journalists published negative articles on Vaida in the newspapers of the time.

The head of the National Democrat party in Bukovina, Aurel Onciul, the promoter of the “peasant collective” of 1904 (together with the Germans, Jews and Ukrainians in Bukovina) received even harsher treatment from his contemporaries (and Romanian historiography). The political compromise reached by A. Onciul (introducing the reforms of elections, communal law and public credit) and which did not involve the notion of ethnic identity, was harshly criticised at the time and considered responsible for weakening the Romanian national movement, led by Iancu Flondor³². The “Bukovinism” promoted by the A. Onciul’s journal *Privitorul* (“Bukovina Romanians have been and will be central Austrians”) had been seen as proof of his “betrayal of his own people”, and of undermining the Romanian interests. The reforms proposed (part of them successful) by the “democrats” of Aurel Onciul, although an obvious progress, were contested because they only supported the “Bukovina-Austrian” position. Some Austrian historians³³ appreciated Aurel Onciul for his loyalty and his efforts towards keeping the identity of Bukovina nationals. He himself declared in the *Privitorul* – “I am a good Austrian because I am a good Romanian.” But for his Romanian contemporaries (and for later historians), Aurel Ritter von Onciul has remained a “foreigner lover”, and “anti-Romanian” in his politics, as well as a “political crook” or, at best, “just a good Austrian”. Admitting my incapacity to appreciate all the intricacies of Bukovina political wars at the time, or those of A. Onciul’s character³⁴, I shall limit myself to noting the constant hostility of Romanian circles towards *Bukowinerthum* (from the beginning of the 20th century and – considering some texts recently published by historians – until these days). After the Union, in 1918, Ion Nistor wrote: “Bukovinism” is doomed to disappear; there is no room within the Great Romania for a “homo bucoviniensis”³⁵. In 1919, Aurel Onciul had a different idea, as he wrote *The Organisation of Great Ro-*

³⁰ The articles are entitled *A historic process, In Franz Ferdinand’s laboratory, I, the Hapsburg Romanian*, apud. L. Maior, *Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. Între...*, p. 9.

³¹ I. Lupaș, *Un episod istoric din 1917*, București 1932.

³² K. Hitchins, *România (1866–1947)*, transl. from the English by G.G. Potra, D. Răzdolescu, București 1996, p. 104.

³³ E. Prokopowitsch, *Die rumänische Nationalbewegung in der Bukowina und der Dako-Romanismus*, Graz-Köln-Böhlau 1965, p. 48, apud. V. Gafița, *Aurel Onciul – Reperes de l’activité politique des premiers années du XX-eme siecle*, „Codrul Cosminului”, 2009, nr 15, p. 155–174.

³⁴ See A. Corbea, “Foreword” to J. Le Rider, *Mittleuropa...*

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of the situation in Bukovina, see I. Livezeanu, *Bukovina: An Austrian Heritage in Greater Romania...*, p. 49 and the following.

*mania*³⁶: “For now, though, Great Romania forms only a geographical unity, and not a State, as it is made up of scattered items, generally with a different historical evolution, and with separate public organisations”.

In 1914, intellectuals and politicians in Transylvania and Bukovina faced a difficult choice. They could not deny their Hapsburg, Central European identity, and could not oppose the unionist ideal. They had supported the rights of Romanians within the Austrian-Hungarian empire, asking for the abolition of the Dual Monarchy, but their principles were in total contradiction to the idea of liberals in the Kingdom (“Union at any cost!”) and with the formula of an organic national state, which had eventually been adopted and left no room for the autonomy dreams of the provinces³⁷.

How does the 20th century Romanian historiography reflect all these events until 1945? We have to consider the fact that Romanian historiography became professional rather late, towards the end of the 19th century and became considerably influenced by the “Junimea’s” critical spirit. But Herder’s romantic model (which was embraced by the whole region during the nation-forming period) was not overcome even in the 20th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, the 1848 (pro-European) nationalism gradually gave way to local nationalism (as, inter alia, exemplified by Nicolae Iorga), with a mission to claim the uniqueness of Romanian people and the exemplarity of their history. The support structure for historical enterprises is still based on “the noble origin of the Romanian people”, “the continuity of Romanians in Dacia” and “the fulfilment of the unity ideal for all Romanians”, which leads to the retrospective unification of the past. Even the historians standing in opposition to N. Iorga do not deviate from this romantic model, although they claim scientific objectivity, and continue to subject historical research to political and polemical demands of the period. In 1943, C.C. Giurescu described the “Romanian land” as a legacy from Burebista and Decebal, where Romanians have always lived in large numbers, and he established some kind of historical causality between the conquest of the three countries by Mihai Viteazul, in 1600, and the union of 1918³⁸. Ion Lupaș, in *Istoria unirii românilor*³⁹, clearly rejected any role of negotiations and diplomatic agreements, as well as conflicts and political errors in the achievement of the 1918 union. On a pro domo tone, he asserted that Romania Integra, for which “these people of saints and martyrs had always fought” was “the natural consequence of hundreds of years of historical preparation”. Moreover, whatever Romanians “of adverse thought” might have said, the Almighty did not want Transylvania to be left on the margins, under the foreign rule... In *Origines et formation de l’unité roumaine*, G.I. Brătianu tried to present “the invariable basis for our [Romanians’] right to unity”, its immutable reasons, offering “ethnic, linguistic and historical arguments”⁴⁰.

³⁶ A. Onciul, *Organizația României-Mari*, Tipografia H. Czopp, Cernăuți 1920.

³⁷ Vezî L. Boia, „Germanofilii”. *Elita intelectuală românească în anii primului război mondial*, București 2009, p. 9–122.

³⁸ C.C. Giurescu, *Istoria Românilor. Din cele mai vechi timpuri până la moartea regelui Ferdinand I*, București 1943, p. 17.

³⁹ I. Lupaș, *Istoria unirii românilor*, București 1937, p. 8–10.

⁴⁰ G.I. Brătianu, *Origines et formation de l’unité roumaine*, Bucharest 1943, p. 12. See also L. Boia, *Istorie și mit în cultura română*, București 1997, p. 49–55.

Such a historical context, where the romantic-Herder model remains central for Romanian historiography, makes any federative projects and any assertion of regional identity appear as an unwanted and uncomfortable legacy. When they did not simply ignore it, emphasising the “organic quality” of the nation itself and its irreversible historical phases of evolution (N. Iorga), they fought it as heresy or, more subtly, adapted it to the local-nationalist vision, by omissions, euphemisms and various other means of over-interpretation. Selecting only the parts concurring with the dominant discourse from the biography and works of the author, has been quite an obvious solution to support one’s views. For example, in a June 9, 1937 conference, Grigore Nandriș declared “the forgotten” A.C. Popovici, a descendant of Mihai Eminescu, appreciating the endurance of his nationalist ideas. Nandriș presents Popovici only as the author of the *Reply...* of Romanian students in 1892 (which brought him a conviction by the Hungarian authorities and forced him to live in exile), of a text resembling *Chestiunea naționalităților și modul soluțiunii sale în Ungaria* (1894). He appreciated the fact that, although a polyglot, Popovici was not perverted by foreign cultures. In „O mărturie”, the foreword to the conference published as a brochure, Simion Mehedinți also saw A.C. Popovici as the most “ardent” follower of M. Eminescu, and the one who continued Eminescu’s doctrine. And Mehedinți actually made excuses for Popovici (unexpressly): “It is true that, before 1918, he [A.C. Popovici] had considered the formula of federalisation for the nations within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy”⁴¹.

Very few writings between the two world wars overcome this pattern, and they were not written by historians. The book *Cu privire la Franz Ferdinand* Constantin Graur from the year 1935 is quite noteworthy in this respect. *Români și ideea federalistă*, the 1946 PhD thesis of George Ciorănescu – who lived in exile until the fall of communism – was published in 1996, based on a typed manuscript owned by the family. The discussion on the European organisational plans after 1918 was mainly present in the journals of the time, and the authors included politicians, economists, international law specialists, writers, and only rarely professional historians.

Epilogue

Romanian communist regime confiscated historiography, changing it into a propaganda tool. They started by arresting historians who did not comply, by eliminating their books from libraries as well as black-listing them and continued rewriting history over the next decades⁴². After the initial stage of de-nationalisation, and moving in the direction indicated by the official “historian” Mihail Roller⁴³, the next stage was that of fervent nationalism. Then, the communist regime recovered (i.e. adapted by distorting) a series of previous authors and historical writings. The fact that some

⁴¹ G. Nandriș, *Aurel C. Popovici. Cu „O mărturie” de S. Mehedinți*, Cernăuți 1937.

⁴² See Al. Zub, *Orizont închis*, Iași 2000.

⁴³ M. Roller, *Probleme de istorie. Contribuții la lupta pentru o istorie științifică în R.P.R.*, Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român, Bucharest 1951.

of these writings had been forbidden over the decades following the year 1947, and some of their authors had been persecuted by the communist regime actually prevented the production of any critical discourses. The same happened with other humanities – as a forbidden work was being “rehabilitated”, any critical stand would have seemed tantamount to the support for the Stalinist policy they had just overcome, which no honest researcher would have dared to do. Besides, those who wanted to separate themselves from the communist propaganda were looking towards the period between the wars (which the collective imagination saw as a “golden age” of prosperity and democracy⁴⁴) and found their models among the numerous supporters of localism. Both the ideologists of the communist party as well as the free spirits were looking, then, to the same historiographic “inheritance”, to recover something that could be adapted to the new times. The former wished to build a sort of historical legitimacy for themselves, and the latter created their own view on history and a set of working methods (and secondarily, a compensation for the communist reality by mythologizing the past). All of them brought back the romantic age of history, but the “enlisted historians” used Herder’s model to support scientific materialism. All of them, although with different intentions, resuscitated anti-Europeanism.

The communist “revolutionary romanticism” found its roots in the “The Spring of Nations”, Nicolae Bălcescu became – in the historiography and literature of the time – a kind of proto-communist⁴⁵. What historians of the 19th century – who, convinced of their romantic “mission” as founding fathers, sometimes invented “documents” and chronicles to bear witness to the antiquity of the Romanian people – had never dreamt of was achieved by the communist historical propaganda: the Romanian unitary state was 2050 (!) years old, from the times of Burebista. The great historical treaties of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania silenced any other (relatively) independent historiographic initiatives while, at the same time, impressed the new mythology on the public opinion.

Cultural autarchy and protochronism (Romanian pre-eminence in all aspects of life) were accompanied by xenophobic attitudes in historical approaches, displayed by the reinforcement of an anachronistic ethnic pride. Brochures and books published under Ceausescu’s authority vituperate against cosmopolitanism. People who did not “criticise”, or “refute” the Romanian foreign policy between the two world wars were castigated⁴⁶. From 1971 to 1989, communist historians dreamt up some of the most fantastic and obedient theories in order to give legitimacy to the “achievements” of the time. I am not going to offer any more examples from the historical writings of the time, even though they now present us with samples of involuntary humour. It may be enough for me to say that, as a consequence of the “cultural revolution”, they are based on “historical necessity” and on an “exclusive historical truth”.

⁴⁴ See B. Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2000)*, Iași 2010.

⁴⁵ A. Drăgușanu, *Nicolae Bălcescu, în propaganda comunistă* [in:] *Miturile comunismului românesc*, coord. L. Boia, București 1995, p. 131–165.

⁴⁶ See V. Georgescu, *Politică și istorie. Cazul comuniștilor români, 1944–1977*, ed. a II-a, București 2008.

The references to imperial legacy were only negative; various political and cultural personalities were incriminated for their cosmopolitanism, for “pro-Hapsburg”, “pro-German” activity which was equal to “antinational”. Central Europe became a spectre, a bogey man shown every now and then to Romanians in order to reinforce the feeling of being “under siege”, the fear that the country could be dismembered by “enemies from abroad and enemies within”. In the 1980’s, when – under the guidance of the writings of Milan Kundera, Czesław Miłosz, Vaclav Havel and others – Central Europe was rediscovered in the West⁴⁷, and Central European identity became an almost “dissident concept”, Romanian intellectuals in exile had other preferred topics of discussion.

Only in the middle of the 1990s, when the issue of “bringing Romania back into Europe” became of interest to Romanian intellectuals, due to the publication of Adrian Marino’s studies and essays⁴⁸, there was an attempt to define the concept of Central Europe, and a discussion on Romania’s affiliation (in its entirety or only for some regions⁴⁹) to the Central European area. Professional historians, particularly those who started their careers before 1989, were less involved in these debates. Towards the end of the 1990’s, the main theoretical texts on Central Europe had made their way to the Romanian public, in the “A Treia Europă” collection of Polirom Publishing House in Iași. *Provincia* and *Alteră*, two journals published in Târgu Mureș, focused on topics least discussed in the Romanian media until then: the relationship between the ethnic – national – multinational, civic nationalism, regional reconstruction of Romania, minority cultures and so on.

The nationalists reacted promptly, fortunately not with the same consequences as in the between-the-wars period. The “line which cuts the country in two” agitated the minds during the 1990 election campaign. The most powerful party at the time, whose leader was a former *aparatic*, used a map produced by S. Huntington, where the border between Western and Eastern Christianity follows the Carpathian arch. This was enough to reactivate fears of “tearing Transylvania off the motherland”, which led to aggressive declarations against both the political enemies and national minorities⁵⁰. “Federalisation”, but also “autonomy” and “regionalisation” were still, at the end of the 1990’s, expressions capable of triggering hysterical reactions, fear of “the country being split”, and they fed the speeches of both the populist-nationalists and extremist parties⁵¹.

Just as in Romania anticommunism was a post-communist phenomenon, the re-discovery of Central Europe as the “stolen West”⁵² happened here years after the fall

⁴⁷ T. Judt, *Redescoperirea Europei Centrale* [in:] *Europa Centrală. Nevroze, dileme, utopii*, coord. A. Babeți și C. Ungureanu, Iași 1998, p. 17 and the following.

⁴⁸ See A. Marino, *Pentru Europa*, Editura Polirom, Iași 1995.

⁴⁹ See G. Molnár, *Problema transilvană*, în G. Molnár, G. Andreescu (coord.), *Problema transilvană*, Editura Polirom, Iași 1999, p. 12–37.

⁵⁰ The only benefit from such a populist-nationalist power trip is an extremely interesting dialogue between Romanian and Hungarian intellectuals around the “Transylvania issue”. The articles were included in the volume G. Andreescu, G. Molnár (coord.), *Problema transilvană...*

⁵¹ L. Boia, „Amenințarea federalistă”, „Curentul”, 21 decembrie, 1998.

⁵² M. Kundera, *Un Occident kidnappé*, „Le Debat”, 27 noiembrie, 1983.

of the Iron Curtain. When the topic seemed exhausted everywhere else, Romanian intellectuals began to approach it professionally, finally overcoming the journalistic ebullience which reminds us of the interwar period. As in the past, it was usually just a matter of making ideas “from abroad” known to a larger public, in the context of a general effort towards the European integration. However, the bibliography needs to be thoroughly updated.

Romania’s “imperial legacy” – which some consider lost after 1918, whilst others abhor to this day – seems to be haunting the collective subconscious of the Romanian, triggering aggressive reactions to maintain what Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu has termed the “Balkan neurosis”⁵³.

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⁵³ See V. Dem. Zamfirescu, *Nevroza balcanică*, București 2012.

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