THE ROMANIAN INTERWAR SOCIETY. IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

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Abstract: When we talk about Romanian interwar society, we refer to the period between World War I and World War II (1918–1939), a time marked by profound transformations. This era, often regarded as a "golden age" of Romanian culture, was characterized by the following features: Social Structure, Political Landscape, and Cultural Renaissance. The ideological context of Romanian interwar society was shaped by a dynamic interplay of local identity influences and the tensions between Western and modernism, nationalism, traditionalism. This period, marked by the creation of Greater Romania and the integration of diverse cultural and ethnic regions, fostered intellectual debates and the rise of ideological movements.

Keywords: Influences, interwar, society, philosophers, culture.

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The history of a people will always represent for both, writers and readers, a point of maximum interest, which will prompt them to search incessantly, clues to help them decipher the complex and contradictory developments of a people. The history of Romania fits perfectly into this category that generates the desire to unravel the mysteries, being such a controversial and complex field. Over time, that is, starting with the medieval era and continuing until the twentieth century, the Romanians went through similar stages with the other peoples of Eastern Europe. It is easy to recall feudalism, when the economy was based on agriculture and rural society, and then, during the First World War, the transition to the industrialized economy and urban society. In the interwar period, in a period of only twenty years, Romania is experiencing a fulminating modernization, continued then by the communists, who, in the next forty years, will continue this modernization, however, with goals, but especially with personal methods. Romanians have always been in the oscillating position between the two geographical parts. Due to this place that Romania occupies between the east and the west, historians have a broad perspective through which they can discern the historical events unfolding on the Romanian land. Although this competition between east and west for the minds and souls of Romanians really began hundreds of years ago, in the interwar period, the modern Romanian state begins to shape itself from an economic, social, cultural and political point of view, based on the European model. Europe, which was represented by the west and center, was a special and distinct category in the Romanian mentality. This European concept represents the ideal for the ordinary Romanian, a concept that was nothing but the image of a modern, civilized, dynamic and progressive world, which Romania was becoming increasingly attracted to. The embrace of the West represented a mirage that Romanians were equally attracted to, but also scared. The fear started from the idea that a merger with the western peoples would lead to the loss of the Romanian national identity. Therefore, the constant concern of the intellectuals and the Romanian politicians was to create an administrative system adapted to the Romanian people, through which to ensure the stability of the state, and Romanians to receive help to progress in all areas of activity. In their action, they were inspired by different European patterns, and here, we mention: the centralization of power, like the French, or the participation of citizens in the political system, according to the Belgian model. However, those who promulgated laws, or drafted constitutions, did not imitate. They were only adapting, taking into account

their own history, but also the economic and social condition of Romania. However, the Romanian economy was gradually drawn into the international financial and economic system, as Europeans began to discover and recognize the value and wealth of agricultural goods, but also raw materials of Romanian origin, which became essential for their industries. Also, the Romanian market became valuable for the products, and implicitly, for their earnings. Although these international interests and influences were extremely strong during the First World War, it can be said that the main reason of the Romanians regarding this integration, the, it was only the personal impulse to develop his own economy. This was also how Romanians proved their true value and measure.

When we refer to the historical events of a people, we notice that usually in the works of history, the philosophical phenomenon is always bypassed. Because this work aims to reconstruct an overview of what happened in the interwar period in the Romanian space, it is imperative that we also appeal to the transformations suffered by the people, from a philosophical point of view. It is clear that an analysis of this era cannot be fully done, bypassing this phenomenon. In this situation, attention will be directed exclusively to those ideological debates that have extended to the cultural life and which directly influenced it. The fact that after the First World War, both Europe and the other parts of the world have been deeply shaken is already well known. The huge losses were both material and human. And as if it were not enough, all the values on which the world was built up until now, were violently overturned. All the cruelties of the war exposed the face of bestialized humanity to the whole world, because of the intensity and size they reached. All the values conquered by man until the year 1800, from now on seemed shattered. The geography of Europe was altered. But the European and world balance were also shaken because the two great empires that ruled the world disappeared, leaving room for the new nation states, the peoples that finally now, are, were released. Everything was in instability and dissolution. The general state that governed was one of crisis; a crisis that manifested itself both economically and spiritually, and because of which, people were deeply dispelled. All this has led to consequences on absolutely all levels, including the ideological field.

The reason that has been the basis of the culture of all peoples, was now being sacrificed, leaving room for modernization. When we talk about modernization from the point of view of spirituality, we are talking about new openings to the culture of the Orient, so, the emergence of a wave of mysticism. We notice that Buddhism, yoga, and other Asian philosophies are embraced desperately. As philosophers and thinkers "fashionable" in that period, appear Spengler, Tagore, Berdyaev, Merejkovsky, but also many others, about which, Al. Phillipide said they were nothing but the Asiatic idols of European art. Precisely in the light of their works, I will try to further expose the ideological and philosophical atmosphere of the time.

„Criza de astăzi există. După o mare zguduire ca aceea a războiului, paralel cu criza economică urmează, negreșit una morală, ceea ce dă un caracter tragic și neliniștitor crizei de astăzi. Fie că ea este în bună parte și o criză intelectuală, Europa morală de astăzi se află în regres, deci intelectualizarea Europei, e moralizarea ei"[1] said full of optimism, the same Al. Phillipide in „Romanian's Life". Instead, Lucian Blaga, meditating on this phenomenon of morality through the prism of mysticism, said that it is not a crisis, but it turns into a state of affairs „Europa actuală e în stăpânirea unui val de misticism. Misticismul acesta și-a avut, fără îndoială, însemnătatea nemăsurată și pentru științele exacte, a dezvoltării acestora, și

[1] (tr.a.) "Today's crise exists. After a great shaking like that of war, parallel to the economic crisis follows, without a doubt, a moral one, which gives a tragic and unsettling character to the crisis today. Whether it is in large part an intellectual crisis, the moral Europe of today is in decline, so the intellectualization of Europe, it is its moralization" Al. Phillipide, *Moral crisis* article in *Viața românească* magazine, 1923

simțul posibilității, într-un moment când pentru ele posibilitățile erau în exil."[2] Also in Blaga's assent, Radulescu-Motru, diagnoses the same phenomenon that he neither denies nor disregards. He saw in mysticism just another fashion. His view was that this phenomenon was nothing more than a commodity that produced and produced on an industrial level. There were religious works, works of art, politics, philosophy, all with mystical tendencies. And this did not happen for anyone felt "calling culture", but only because this was trade. Mysticism was profitable, and its merchandise flooded all modern markets. Everything that appeared was nothing but the product of this specialty. And it is necessary to recall even professionals from philosophy, art, politics, theology. It is admirable that Radulescu-Motru had the courage to expose his ideas regarding this current precisely in Thinking magazine, at a time when he wanted to, at a time when he wanted to, and he was preparing to start the process of mysticizing Romanian spirituality. However, beyond the industrial character of mysticism, it has continued to remain a phenomenon of fascinating power to this day.

As a culture, we are therefore in a moment of rebooting. In addition to the spiritual crisis, there was also the social crisis of a world that tended to modernize, and which, from the point of view of the new thinkers, previously mentioned, represented the death of culture. This was due to the fact that the technique flooded life, leading to the replacement of the individual in places where he was previously indispensable, leading to the degradation of the spiritual condition of man.

The evolution, the development of Romanian society, in the interwar period, was characterized by an alternation in terms of periods of crisis and stability. The political crisis, with few exceptions, can be said to have been a mark of life for Romania among the Two World Wars. We say this because of the existence of the thirty cabinets, with the thirty prime ministers who were in charge of the country during the period 1918-1940 (22 years of peace).

All these domestic and foreign policy situations were the core of the Great National Debate aimed at developing, but especially establishing, the national identity. The question that was on everyone's lips, and which was already becoming a national controversy, was whether Romania had to focus on the Western model, that is, to join the urbanized, modernized and industrialized European states, or if it was better to remain true to the rural, orthodox and especially agrarian national traditions. Was modernization the right way? Or was it just a modality of betrayal of your own identity and values? However, there was also a third variant, which combined the two previously presented. This third variant was proposed by those who assured Romanians, already bullied by the weather situation, the fact that everything of value will be preserved in their traditions and customs, but they will also be able to enjoy economic progress and European social modernisation. All these problems drew politicians, but also social thinkers with different ideological beliefs, into an intellectual trap, which essentially represented the core of the interwar period.

The intellectuals who participated in the debate on the future course of the country were also divided into two large groups: traditionalists and Europeanists. Europeans treated Romania as already part of Europe and insisted that economic and social progress is the way to go, already following the example of the urbanised and industrialised West. On the other hand, the traditionalists emphasized the importance of the agrarian character of our country and sought in this field development models that were based on the unique and long-lasting heritage of the country. Even though the two groups had affinities regarding pre-war thought currents, it was obvious the inspiration from the agrarian and industrial visions of Romania in the old period, their thinking was, however, original to what their intellectual ancestors were exposing, because at the moment Romania's place in Europe was reinterpreted in terms of the

[2] (tr.a.) "The current Europe is in possession of a wave of mysticism. This mysticism had, without a doubt, the immeasurable significance for the exact sciences, their development, and the sense of possibility, at a time when for them the possibilities were in exile." Lucian Blaga, *On the edge of time* article in *Gândirea* magazine, 1922

experiences acquired, but especially, the, in light of the expectations they had from the future.

The Europeans, although they were addressing a massive development from various perspectives, however, they agreed with the traditionalists and shared similar views on the modern history of the country and its place in Europe. Thus, as the main representatives of this group, the literary critic Eugen Lovinescu, as well as Stefan Zeletin, economist and sociologist, are noted. For the first time in the scientific literature they proposed a broad research on the causes of the birth of a modern Romania. As a conclusion, they considered that what was decisive for the survival of the country were the Revolution of 1848 and the Constitution of 1866. Both researchers associated this modernization process with the introduction of Western-type capitalism into the Romanian Principalities. However, the two were convinced that the main element in the emergence of modern Romania was the forces outside Europe; also, their belief was that Westernization was the necessary and mandatory historical stage for the development of each country. Eugen Lovinescu, the most influential literary critic of that period, sought even deeper the origins of modern Romania and found them in the first half of the nineteenth century, and his conclusion was that the modernization of our homeland began with the first intellectual and cultural contacts with Western Europe. In his representative work, "History of modern Romanian civilization", he presented this meeting with modernization as a struggle between a domestic and a western system of ideas. In support of his ideas, came Stefan Zeletin, who, a materialist philosopher, was sure that the fate of Romania was closely related to the fate of Western capitalism. "Romanian bourgeoisie: its origin and historical role" (1925), which is its most influential work, gives us an economic interpretation of the modernization of Romania. Zeletin explained that modern Romania was nothing more than the product of basic economic changes that were generated by the introduction of capitalism in the western part of Europe, following the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), by which the Romanian Principalities were freed from Ottoman control in respect to trade. He also showed how, following the processes of economic transformation, the autochthonous bourgeoisie was born, of which he had a clear opinion that it was a class that would lead the country through all the milestones of modernization.

Although the arguments of the Europeanists were very clear regarding the time of the start of the modernization of Romania, they were opposed by individuals, but also groups, who believed that in the local past there are enough important models for the future of a modern Romania. The term traditionalists very clearly describe their position, but in reality they had different opinions, and even contrary to what the Romanian tradition really meant. Their basis, however, was a common one, namely, the rural character that characterized the development of the Romanian people. In their belief, they were vehemently opposed to social and cultural imports from the West. The greatest influence on cultural and intellectual life in terms of traditionalist currents had a founder of the literary magazine "Thinking". They were known as thinkers, and they promoted religious and mystical experiences, were attracted by speculative thinking, but also by the spirituality of folklore. Paradoxically, however, all these traditional ideas were expressed in absolutely modern language. As brand representatives of thinkers we have Nichifor Crainic, Lucian Blaga, Nae Ionescu. Nichifor Crainic was an unwavering supporter of native values and was alarmed by what was meant to be modernization. He understood through this modernization a spiritual and moral decline of the Romanian society. He wanted to stop this desire for modernization by valuing the authentic teachings of the Romanian people, that is, through the dogmas of Eastern orthodoxy. The national philosopher and poet, Lucian Blaga, was another great figure representing the Circle „Thinking". He, together with his colleagues, poets and prose writers, researched the deep sources regarding the indigenous tradition, he sought beyond Eastern orthodoxy to find out the most suitable way for national progress. The conclusion on how Blaga understood the

problems of modernization can be found in her work "Orizont and stil" (1935). Also, his general theory, applied in the case of Romanians, is exposed in the paper „Mioritic space" (1936). Blaga insisted that Romanian spirituality is the one that determines the national character very much, and that it is preserved in an absolutely intact form in the rural world. In the ancestral world of the Romanian village he found forgotten secrets of an era of innocence, a period before man knew the sin of knowledge, a sin that later alienated man from nature but especially from his true "eu"[3]. All these traditionalist ideas have manifested themselves in forms that are more and more varied. According to the philosopher Nae Ionescu, another basic representative of traditionalists, Europe is now on the threshold of a new spiritual beginning. He said the world would be dominated by technology and modern science. He militated on orthodoxy as the source of Romanian spirituality, which, he said, was what always separated Romanians from a Catholic and Protestant Europe, this implicitly contributed to a valuable development of the Romanian. His ideas were not echoed, so Ionescu found countless supporters among the intellectuals of the younger generation. Among them we mention: Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran.

As I have already said, together with traditionalists and Europeanists, a third possibility for Romania's development has emerged, but this time to bring together the agrarian heritage, with the need and desire to adapt from a modern European perspective, for social and economic progress. The most representative personality regarding this third option for Romania was Virgil Madgearu. He elaborated the agricultural doctrine of Romania according to which, our country being a third world between the socialist collectivism of the east and the capitalism of the west. This doctrine highlighted two fundamental elements: first, it stated that the family farm was a different mode of production, and was the basis of the national economy. The second element evoked by this doctrine was that the peasant state, this entity responsible to the majority of the population, was obliged to replace the existing order. As a political pillar, Madgearu represented the new type of state, able to satisfy the aspirations, but especially the mass needs of the population. His belief was that Romania's economic and social progress was imperative to remain different from that of the West. He was also aware that the peasantry represented a separate class totally different from the psychological and economic point of view from the urban labour and from the bourgeoisie.

Although opinions on these three ways of modernizing Romania were divided, at the Great Debate on the perfection of the national character, all participants agreed on at least one aspect, namely, that Romania has undergone major and very rapid changes in the previous century and that at the moment, the Romanian country was increasingly similar to Western Europe. What remained indistinguishable was whether the Europeanization process was good or bad, and especially how badly it affected the structure of the Romanian society. All the internal and external economic crises and the rather troubled international relations of the 1930s were a decisive point and a tough test for the visions of the future of modern Romania.

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