

Abstract

The habilitation thesis entitled *Caesura and transformation. Romania from the royal dictatorship to the Ceaușescu regime: sources, themes, directions* contains the main contributions of my postdoctoral research as well as the academic development plans which form the basis for my request to receive the habilitation certificate in history, in the field of Romanian contemporary history, especially the history of the Second World War, the history of Romanian communism (Romanian intelligentsia, question of minorities, everyday life, social history), and the Cold War.

After completing my PhD thesis (December 2005), my research focused on two main directions: first, the political and regional developments during the Second World War and their consequences for the political and territorial order of Central and East European countries; and secondly, the history of Romanian communism, where my research covers various aspects of foreign policy, the evolution of the cadre apparatus and the selection rules for communist party members, the role of intelligentsia in the process of legitimizing the state-party, and the relations between society and the communist regime as reflected in letters to power.

In the first case, my research relating to the history of the Second World War concentrated on Romanian territorial issues in the context of territorial arrangements which resulted in Eastern and Central Europe after the signing of Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact (August 1939), and the analysis of strategic interests and geopolitical developments in the Black Sea region (1939-1947).

At the end of the 1930s, the situation of Romania was a problematical one: internally, it faced with the rise of extremism (see, for example, the evolution of Legionary Movement) and the erosion of parliamentary democracy as a result of interventions by King Carol II in the mechanisms of political power; externally, it was confronted with the triumph of revisionism and the need to replace old alliances with new ones.

Dismemberment of Czechoslovakia meant the end of the Versailles settlement and the reshaping of European space in accordance with German interests. Soviet interests were also directed to this region. The political agenda of the two great powers, their common interests which linked each other, even if only for a short time, were deciphered by Grigore Gafencu, minister of Foreign Affairs (21 Decembrie 1938-1 Iunie 1940), in one of his most important books

entitled *Derniers jours de l'Europe. Un voyage diplomatique en 1939/The Last Days of Europe. A Diplomatic Journey in the year 1939* (Curtea Veche, București), a new edition of which I edited and published in 2012. Grigore Gafencu's memories of the trip taken across a Europe threatened by the specter of war illustrates the efforts of European diplomacy, although in vain, to avoid war. Also, these notes are important for understanding the events which preceded the outbreak of war that changed the history of the entire world.

Starting from the events of 1939, my research focused also on the consequences which the Soviet-German Pact had on Romania's borders. The territorial losses of summer 1940, the abdication of King Carol II and the establishment of a National-Legionary State pushed Romania into the sphere of German interests. Romanian territorial issues, especially the recovery of all lost borders, were one of the main sensitive questions in Romanian-German relations during the war. In the spring of 1941, the coup d'état in Yugoslavia re-opened the very sensitive issue concerning the Serbian Banat and the Romanian groups of populations situated south of the Danube. In the event of massive frontier changes in the Balkans, the Romanian government thought that Romania could be one of the beneficiaries of these new territorial arrangements. But the German plans did not include any extension of Romanian frontiers to the South. The foreign minister Mihai Antonescu could only hope that question of frontiers would be re-opened in the event of a German victory.

The recovery of Bessarabia and crossing of the Dniester by the Romanian Army added new dimensions to the territorial and population programme. In the context of German war operations, Transnistria became a very sensitive issue for the Romanian government, who did not accept this territory as compensation for the loss of Transylvania. At the end of the war, the idea of legitimate frontiers proved to be a very difficult aim and Romanian government was forced to give up colonizing the territory beyond the Dniester line.

The question of Transylvania proved to be by far one of the most difficult issue not only for Romanian or Hungarian government but also for the great powers (Germany, Soviet Union, Great Britain and USA). During the war were formulated various scenarios for its post-war status and most of them were focused on tracing an ethnic frontier between Romania and Hungary along with a population exchange. In the view of the Anglo-American planners the solving of Romanian-Hungarian dispute was the main key to the stability of Eastern and Central Europe.

Another project related to the topic of the Second World War was research on strategic interests and geopolitical developments in the Black Sea region (1939-1947). This project was granted by the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/89/1.5/S/61104 with the title „*Social sciences and humanities in the context of global development - development and implementation of postdoctoral research*”.

The competition for taking control over the Black Sea had an important place on the diplomatic agenda of the great powers. If Germany and Soviet Union achieved a first success in August 1939 in drawing the spheres of influence, a year later, in November 1940, the extension of the agreement over access routes at the Black Sea proved to be a real turning point. Soviet demands entered into conflict with German plans for South Eastern Europe, the Reich being directly interested, from the perspective of military operations, in preventing Soviet Russia from taking control of the Black Sea basin. Beyond the territorial agenda, German-Soviet relations was undermined by competition to obtain control of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus Straits. Research in the British National Archives, documentation work in the library of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, as well as the research trip at The Centre for Second World War Studies, University of Edinburgh opened an extensive research field on this topic.

As we know, at the end of the Second World War the European countries were divided into spheres of influence. The decisive Soviet gains, the withdrawal of British diplomacy from Central and East European space, and the intervention of the USA in European affairs gave a new course to postwar history. Once again, Grigore Gafencu proved to be through his analyzes one of the most important advocates of European unity. If in 1939, he had understood the meaning of Soviet-German collaboration, after 1945 the former minister stressed in his articles and public conferences that only a united Europe could ensure the liberation of captive nations and the limitation of Soviet interests. The book which I co-edited and published in 2013, *Grigore Gafencu și proiectul Europei unite. Documente (1944-1956)*, reevaluates an important collection of documents in connection with Grigore Gafencu's activity promoting the project of European unity.

Romania's entry into the sphere of Soviet influence, the imposition of the Stalinist model and the establishment of the popular/communist power had as result the launch of a real offensive against Romanian society. The fight for the *new order*, defined by the principle of class

struggle, against the decadent *old order* begun alongside the start of great projects of radical social transformation: nationalization, industrialization, and collectivization. Intellectuals, as representatives of the old society, were the „beneficiaries“ of special attention from the communist power. My research on Romanian communism also focused on the situation of intellectuals, the strategies of obedience/destruction and attraction developed by the communist party, as well as the response which they had to the „political religion“ of communism. The results of these research have resulted in two volumes. First, entitled *Intelectuali români în arhivele comunismului*, coordinated by Dan Cătănuș, was published in 2006. In the case of the second volume entitled *Cuvintele puterii. Literatură, intelectuali și ideologie în România comunistă*, coordinated with Bogdan Crețu and Daniel Șandru, our intention was to comprehend, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the way in which the space of intellectual creation was invaded by official ideology during 1947-1989. The volume embraced the coordinates of history, theory and literary criticism and those of social and political sciences, analytical perspectives which reveal new directions of research and interpretation of the special relations between intellectuals and the communist regime.

The field of foreign policy, the evolution of Romania from conformism to revolt, was another direction of my research regarding the communist period. In my book entitled *Ieșirea din cerc. Politica externă a regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* (București, INST, 2007) I analyzed the changes in the course of Romanian foreign policy after Stalin's death. The Khrushchev report known as the 'secret speech' (1956), the Hungarian revolution (October-November 1956), the Berlin crises (1961), then the Cuban missile crisis and finally the Declaration of Independence of the Romanian Workers Party from April 1964 were favorable factors for Romanian communist leaders. It was the beginning of a new course in Romanian foreign policy continued and promoted by Ceausescu. This course often caused tensions not only at the level of the communist bloc but also at the level of Romanian-Soviet relations. This development of the course of Romanian foreign policy is found in the volume of documents relating to Romania and the Warsaw Treaty which I published in 2009 (*România și Tratatul de la Varșovia. Conferințele miniștrilor Afacerilor Externe și ale adjuncților lor. 1966-1991*, col. Documente Diplomatice Române, Institutul Diplomatic Român, Editura ALPHA MDN, București, 2009, 1275 p.).

Another of my research projects concerning Romanian communism consisted in the investigation of the complex relations between the communist regime and society as reflected in

the letters which ordinary people or those who were for a time in the party structures sent to the party leaders. The research which I conducted at the National Archives and Diplomatic Archives had the result the publishing of two books. The first one, entitled *Guvernați și guvernanți. Scrisori către putere (1945-1965)*, in collaboration with Laurențiu Constantiniu, came out in 2013. The letters to power are direct proof of the interactions between leaders and led. They are especially valuable sources for understanding how the society functioned and adapted to the rigors of political power. They allow us, on the one hand, to identify the reactions of society (revolt, approval, dissimulation), and, on the other hand, indicate the way in which the power reconfigured the political agenda according to the signals it received from below.

In the other book entitled „*Ceaușescu și poporul!*“. *Scrisori către iubitul conducător*, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun, 2016, I explored the relations between *they* (the leaders party) and *us* (the ordinary people) during the Ceausescu regime. Romanian society oscillated between consensus and dissent. On one hand, there was expressed adherence to the projects of the regime, and, on the other hand, the same society criticized political or economic measures perceived as an intrusion into its privacy. Duplicity was equally a way of finding consensus and escape.

My immediate academic projects related to the period of communism will include two dimensions, recently brought to the attention of the scholars: everyday life and communist nostalgia. In the first case, my project aims to point out a dimension less exploited in Romanian historiography relating to the Ceausescu's regime: the question of popular support that Ceausescu enjoyed in his first years as ruler (see for instance the public condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968), and also the attitude of ordinary people forced to be duplicitous. The modality of construction/deconstruction of the identity of Communist societies represents the main purpose of this project.

Communism in post-communism is another project which I intend to develop in the near future. Romania is not alone regarding the emergence of communist nostalgia: all ex-communist states passing through similar experiences. 25 years after the fall of the communist regime, Romanian society has towards its communist past an ambivalent and contradictory attitude: on the one hand it brings a constant effort to manage social memory, whilst on the other hand it is „haunted“ by nostalgia for communism. People choose to remember communism in the light of the present they are living through, thus projecting their existence into a zone of social safety, invoking the positive experiences of their own communist past.

The last part of the habilitation thesis refers to the teaching abilities which I acquired in the last ten years both through the courses and seminars taught at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, as well as through the courses held within the doctoral school organized at the „N. Iorga“ Institute of History. In 2014-2015, I have coordinated PhD students' work in the frame of a POSDRU project READ („Routes of academic excellence in doctoral and post-doctoral research - READ co-financed through the European Social Fund, by Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, contract no POSDRU/159/1.5/S/137926),

I have supervised graduation papers and masters level dissertations at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, and I was part of the examination board for PhD students supervised by prof. univ. dr. Ioan Chiper, prof. univ. dr. Ileana Cazan, prof. univ. dr. Mihai Retegan, prof. univ. dr. Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, prof. univ. dr. Mihaela Irimia. I have a very good institutional collaboration with the Faculties of History and Political Science, University of Bucharest, and the Faculties of History and Political Science, Ovidius University, Constanta, which allow me to be part of the exam boards.

The diversity of my research projects and also their present interest might be a gain for our doctoral school in attracting PhD students not only from the Faculty of History, but also graduates from other faculties.