

The Importance of the Romanian Library of Freiburg for the Romanian Exile in the Context of the Beginning of the Communism and the Sovietisation of the Romanian Society

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One can notice a growing interest regarding the discovery and the highlighting of the forms of cultural resistance in the 1950-1989 period, especially the highlighting of the importance and significations of the post-war Romanian exile, in the communist period, based on the conservation and development of the interior existence together with keeping the modernist reaction regarding the autonomy of the aesthetics to its political insubordination.

The Romanian Library of Freiburg constitutes an essential starting point in highlighting the types of cultural resistance of the exile. The Romanian cultural exile begun at the start of the 50s in Romania, when the persecutions of the intellectual elite orchestrated by the political regime also started. This article aims to analyse the historical and political context of the appearance of the types of cultural resistance that determined the appearance of cultural associations in the diaspora as a response to the censorship, with a review of the types of associations and cultural institutions that appeared as a form of protest and preservation of Romanian cultural values.

By correlating studies from interdisciplinary fields, we can reunify the image of Romanian exile and its main directions, reconsidering the role of cultural institutions in the context of the transformations of the communist period.

Keywords: *communism; resistance through culture; libraries; Romania; Romanian exile*

1. The historical context of the emergence of the types of resistance through culture in post-war Romania

Historically, we can talk about cultural resistance in Romania in close connection with the changes of the political regime that occurred after the emergence of the communism.

Regarding the perception of the phenomena, the expressions *resistance through culture* or *cultural resistance* appears only later, after the removal of the communist regime in 1989.

The determining and favourable factor that contributed to the instauration of the communist regime was the expansion of the soviet empire, in the aftermath of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Communist regimes were established in all the regions reached by the Red Army, in countries declared defeated, occupied - Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria - or allied - Poland and Czechoslovakia, which went towards communism in the same rhythm, indifferent of their more or less different social economic, political and cultural profile, between 1944-1955 and 1947-1948, with insignificant delays.

"Could Romania have resisted? Could the Romanian society and its political factors have resisted in a greater way than they did it? Countries that in the following decades would really become issues for the communist regimes (Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland... all the time) were no more successful. In this first phase, the pressure was much too high. Nobody could have opposed the soviet roller" (Boia 2016 p. 27) [1]

Thus, on March 6, 1945, the government led by Petru Groza, with the help of the Soviet influence, came to power with only four ministers from the Communist Party (also present in the previous government) but with a slight change: Petre Constantinescu-Iași would become minister in charge of propaganda matters.

The Allied Control Commission (ACC) was the entity that supervised the application of the armistice conditions between Romania and the Allied Power, but, being controlled by a soviet lieutenant, it also led Romania on the road to sovietisation: "it will become the main institution of the Romanian state in the next period, establishing a plenary control, politically partisan and fully interested regarding the society, from the army to the press, from culture to the political and economic life" (Boia 2016 p. 60) [2].

There is a takeover of the media by the communists, who control the radio, the print media and the related trade unions by depriving them of resources, such as paper for printers, as well as by the refusal of the trade unions led by the Communists to print materials about the so-called attacks on democracy.

The moment of the royal strike is next, triggered by the King when he urged Petru Groza to resign, based on the recommendations of the US and British government representatives in Bucharest, who considered the pro-communist government formula unrepresentative for most of the population. Petru Groza refuses, and the King withdraws from public life and does not sign the laws drafted by the government, which, according to the Constitution in effect, became null without his signature.

The Groza government will move to organizing "free" elections to consolidate its position in November 1946. The Bloc of Democratic Parties, a Communist-led alliance, will receive 83.8 percent of the votes, as opposed to the liberals and peasants, which obtained 7 percent.

After obtaining this comfortable majority, in 30th December 1947, King Michael is forced to abdicate in a meeting sought by premier Groza together with the minister of National Economy at that time, the leader of the Communist Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. In the same night, the Popular Republic of Romania is proclaimed, this name being used in order to differ from the capitalist republics, that "are formally ruled by an elected president but are actually ruled by some few hundred families of big bankers, big industrialists and rulers of capitalists monopolies. It is a new form of state, because not only comparison with the monarchy, but also in comparison with any bourgeois republic, the popular republic represents a step forward in the social evolution" [3], Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej promised (cited in Cioroianu 2005).

2. The sovietisation of the Romanian society in the communist period

The signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Assistance with the USSR is next, on February 4, 1948, and a process of Sovietisation begins in Romania, by remodelling all the dimensions of the Romanian society: economy, education, legislation.

"I understand through Sovietisation that mimetic process of introducing a Soviet model in all areas of society: politics, economy, culture, habitat and intellectual-scientific life. The decade of Sovietisation is a decade-long transition period between the post-war reality in the mid-1940s and that of consolidated and internationally recognized international regimes in the mid-1950s. This mimetic process was common to all countries in the area, even if it had particular speeds and manifestations in each of them" (Cioroianu 2005 p. 322) [4]

Regarding the education, the new regime will intervene in the formative process through the transformation of education. The first intervention is legislative, through the Decree 175 of 3rd

August, 1948, which abolishes confessional and private schools, foreign schools, and introduces a single textbook, translated from Russian, schools for minorities are abolished, and educational structures in the country are centralized.

Moreover, the work contracts of the teachers considered reactionary are terminated, and as of October 1, 1948, others are signed, according to the criteria of the regime, namely social origin, the attitude towards the regime, the political affiliation, and so on. Other school principals and inspectors are instated at the recommendation of the party and not of the ministry (Stanciu 2009 p. 215).

The control is institutionalized and applies in parallel to the press, the literary productions, libraries, bookstores and publishing houses.

The nationalization of 1948 also means the end of private publishing houses, printing houses and private bookstores, and the dissolution of the Royal Foundation Publishing House, which transforms into the State Publishing House for Literature and Art. Together with other state-owned publishing houses, they are centralized under the General Directorate of Publishing and Book Distribution Companies, established in 1949.

The communist regime encourages, through these publishing houses "the mass printing of the classics of Marxism and Leninism, of realist-socialist fiction, of miscellaneous works of propaganda (political, cultural, atheist-scientific etc.) as well as textbooks" (Vasile 2011 p. 283) [5].

The distribution of books was, thus, controlled and directed to where the Party wanted to educate, particularly in the rural area.

3. Book control - forum of political-ideological decision in the literary purge

The '50s and '60s strongly marked the Romanian cultural history. The immixture of politics in the social sphere, but also in the literary productions of the past, deformed the mentality of the intellectuals and transformed the method of elaboration of the literary works of the time. In libraries, a campaign was launched to remove from collections representative works in all fields, especially philosophy, literature, memoirs, politics, writings that were not convenient to the political power.

Many writers and men of culture took the road of exile. Others remained in the country, under house arrest, and started a resistance to the censorship movement. Because the free expression of written ideas was impossible to achieve, the dissemination of culture was done in private, through discussions, lectures, debates.

The intellectual class of the society started disappearing, slowly: "In the early 1950s, after the nationalizations, expropriations, evictions from houses, arrests, internships in work colonies, layoffs, and so forth, the Bucharest elite (the mixture of aristocrats, bourgeois, intellectuals) had become bygone. The few attempts to preserve something of what was (atmosphere, relationships, habits, hierarchies) seem today dramatic and useless. The old elite was a world condemned to disappear. One of the few forms that remained had been the somewhat regular meetings in some houses. [...] Some imagined that the communist regime would last for a few years, [...] Others [...] continued to carry their existence by simulating some forms of (imaginary) resistance" (Tănase 2009 p. 24) [6].

The conferences in the houses of some individuals, held by personalities of that time (Constantin Noica, Barbu Slatineanu, Petru Manoliu) were renowned.

"The pre-war elite regrouped in fragile forms, antechambers of prisons, camps, shelter, clandestine existence, and exile. When not of death. The civil society has spent its last moments in these salons, groups of friends, literary cenacles" (Tănase 2009 p. 25) [7]

The first manifestation of the censorship was the purge of the press and libraries, the party dictating, in exclusivity, not only the general orientation, but also the summary of each number of newspapers and existing magazines: *Scântea*, *România liberă*, *Contemporanul*, *Gazeta literară*, *Flacăra*, *Tânărul scriitor*.

There was a "system of double structures", of "double language" (Rad et al. 2011 p. 112), the communism acting invisibly, from underground, through technical censorship but also visibly through the Section of Agitation and Propaganda of the party - the Agitprop, which announced the "great themes": socialist realism, sharpening of the class struggle, the fight against cosmopolitanism and revisionism, the support of collectivization, the struggle for harvests or record productions.

"The years 1948-1955 marked the worst period in Romania's history, when to the hundreds of thousands of arrests, an intellectual murder was added: the assassination of the national culture by the application of socialist realism in literature, art and schools. ... The censorship applies not only to works but also to individuals. Of all the great banned, Blaga had the most tragic fate, and his poetic and philosophical extermination was, in fact, collateral, the extermination of thousands of virtual readers of the works he did not write anymore" (Rad et al. 2011 p. 113) [8]

After 1965, a short liberalization period followed, but in 1971 the censorship resumed the role of "ideological Cerberus", with the "July theses". It will be abolished in 1977, but only as an institution, because ideologically, it remained active through "post-censorship", giving the word to the readers-snitches: "In the stifling atmosphere, two hundred writers and as many artists and scientists will emigrate in the West. There are things to be taken into account when writing a history of Romanian resistance through culture" (Rad et al. 2011 p. 114) [9].

In addition to the ban on the publication of literary works, the next step was the removal from the libraries of the works that did not agree with the regime. In 1957 a meeting of the libraries is held regarding this theme, of the "state and perspective of development of the libraries in the Romanian Popular Republic" (Corobca 2014 p. 39) the conclusion being: "Librarians from the countryside have to consider themselves propagandists and agitators in the fight for the socialist transformation of the village" [10], by taking out of the libraries the books that belong to the "hostile" literature.

At the start of the '50s the special fund is created in the big Romanian libraries, but before this period, the censors mentioned, in reports, the selection of purged books for the "documentary" fund.

"Documents have been recovered since 1944 [...] until 1989, when instructions were issued, provisions on libraries which have the right to hold documentary or special documents, the list of purged books, lists of authors who have gone into exile, notes from the ministries involved in the process of purification, the last document being an address of the Council of Culture and Socialist Education of 9 July 1989 on the withdrawal of books from the reading circuit and an annex containing 152 authors, most of whom went into exile" (Corobca 2014 p. 79) [11].

The General Directorate of Press and Printing will be responsible for setting up the special fund, at the initiative of the Cultural Assemblies. The idea of this special fund of libraries was to keep from destruction copies of purgeable books and to make them available to well-verified scientists and, if necessary, at the disposal for research. This special fund will be established in addition to the next

libraries: the Library of the Academy of the Romanian Popular Republic, the central university libraries from Bucharest, Iassy and Cluj, the regional libraries from Timișoara, Arad, Oradea, Stalin-city, Sibiu, Galați, Târgu-Mureș, Craiova, Turnu Severin. While a system of control of the already printed or pending print books was developed in the country, institutions that aim to maintain the Romanian values are established abroad, by the Romanian intellectuals that request asylum in several European countries.

4. The emergence of diaspora cultural and literary associations in reaction to censorship; the exile of the writers

Between 1950 and 1957 numerous associations, foundations, committees, institutions, libraries, and leagues of Romanians far and wide are established. We note, besides the Romanian Library of Freiburg, the Nicolae Bălcescu Association from Chicago, the Romanian-Brazilian Cultural Association, Rio de Janeiro, The Romanian Library from Stockholm, the National Center of Free Romanians, Paris, the Anticommunist League from Tel Aviv, the Society for culture and Romanian literature, London (just some examples) (Filitti et al. 2008 p. VIII).

The men of culture from exile started to create, at the shelter of their adoptive countries, and a current of the writers from exile is developed, with a rich publishing activity. It is estimated that the percentage of the writers in exile from Romania is greater than that of any other East-European state, reaching 12 per cent between the years 1949-1989 (Behring 2001 p. 23).

We can talk about three waves of political-determined emigration: the first, in the '40-'50, the second in the '70-'80, the third, in the '80.

The first period is characterised by the fall of the monarchy through the forced abdication of King Michael, the remaining in exile of the writers that were supporters of the Legionnaire movement that also held diplomatic functions. We note here: Mircea Eliade, which activated in the diplomatic service in London, then in Lisbon and later in Paris; Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, cultural attaché of the Romanian Embassy from Zagreb, who resides in Paris, and has a rich novelist career, in Romanian and French; Vintilă Horia, press attaché in Rome and Wien, leaves to Italy, Argentina and then comes back to Europe, in Madrid, while being a productive writer. Other examples of writers from this first wave, mentioned by Eva Behring, are: Pamfil Șeicaru, Emil Cioran (disputable case, because of his assimilation in the French culture), Horia Stamate, George Uscătescu. Geographically speaking, the centre of their life became Spain; open at that time to those who declared their fascist option.

Another category of emigration is that of the intellectuals that believed in the democratization of the political and cultural life, after the fall of the Antonescu regime, but were disappointed. Virgil Ierunca and Monica Lovinescu are eloquent examples of people of culture that will become reference personalities of Romanian exile, editing, among others, together with Mircea Eliade, the first Romanian journal in exile, *Luceafărul*.

In the second wave, between the '70-'80, we cannot talk about a group of exiles, most being particular cases of writers that refused the cultural politics of the country but had fallen prey to the false optimism installed with the coming to power of Nicolae Ceaușescu. For a short while, the writers of this generation enjoyed an unexpected space for creation, which did not correspond to the communist standard. Here, Eva Behring (2001 p. 35) mentions: Dumitru Țepeneag, Ilie Constantin, Petru Popescu, Paul Goma.

The '80s will mark a new wave of politically and cultural motivated emigration, in a period of extreme conditions in all fields of social life. The constraints of the censorships reached the highest levels and a policy of misinformation was imposed, doubled by the economic crisis. In this period, the following go into exile: Norman Manea, Ion Caraion, Alexandru Papilian, Matei

Vişniec, Bujor Nedelcovici, Nicolae Balotă, Mircea Zăciu.

5. The Romanian Library of Freiburg

Coming back to the cultural institutions established in exile, libraries have a special place, together with societies, foundations and publishing houses.

The Romanian Library of Freiburg, one of the oldest settlements of Romanian exile was born in Germany. It preserves the history of the Romanian exile through the variety of written testimonials that it holds, starting with press articles or books and continuing with important documents regarding activities and meetings that took place within the Romanian exile. This institution was established on the 1st of May 1949, in the city of Freiburg im Breisgau, Federal Republic of Germany, by the initiative of Virgil Mihăilescu and a group of Romanian refugees.

Subsequently, the library was officially recognised on the 21st July 1950, through the legalisation of a statute of constitution and functioning, in conformity with the laws of that time in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The intention and purpose of the library was to offer to the exiles and foreigners interested in Romanian culture, books, journals, or Romanian cultural documents, in a moment in which the authorities from the Popular Republic of Romania were systematically destroying everything that was contrary to the interests of the new political regime from Bucharest.

The Romanian Library of Freiburg is important both through the cultural activity it held between 1949 and 1989, and also after the fall of the communist regime and up to nowadays, for the evolution of the relations of the Romanian exile with the authorities of German state or with representatives of other states.

Among the objectives of the library, as resulting from the its statute, are: gathering of papers regarding the history and culture of the Romanian people; collecting all the Romanian journals and newspapers that appeared abroad; the creation of an archive comprising of documentary materials regarding all the Romanian manifestations abroad (memoirs, brochures etc.); the organization of a small museum containing works of art, fabrics, paintings, photographic reproductions; a special section for the collection of works of general knowledge from foreign literatures; publishing of works important for the Romanian culture; editing a general catalogue of the Library, a cultural-informative bulletin to present general problems regarding Romanian culture, a bibliographical bulletin (Manolescu 2003 p. 86).

The Library published *Buletinul Bibliotecii Române* (The Bulletin of the Romanian Library), starting in 1953, of which, up to 1991, about twenty volumes were edited. Among the achievements of the first years of activity are the publication of some "wandering editions" (Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Alecsandri, I.L. Caragiale, Lucian Blaga etc.), multiplied with the help of a mimeograph.

According to Mihai Neagu Basarab, the current director of the Romanian Library of Freiburg, the library now holds about 200.000 items, of which about a quarter are doublets, the numbers of readers reaches 50 per year, and the staff of the library is comprised of volunteers that work eight hours per week. At this time, the issue of digitisation is out of the question, although a start did take place about six years ago, when steps were taken in this direction.

6. Conclusions

Communism gravely influenced not only the economic and social existence of Romania but also its cultural life. In this aspect, Romania was, probably, the most affected country from the entire

communist bloc, having the highest proportion of exiled writers. In this context, the cultural life of exiled Romanians had a special significance. Their works reflected both the uncensored version of Romanian culture and a connection to a time before communism. Because of the high number of writers in exile and the multitude of their diverse works (books, articles, memoirs, journals etc.), the necessity of bringing them all together in a place that would reflect the Romanian culture from abroad became evident. One of these places was the Romanian Library of Freiburg, a noble attempt to salvage and offer to public the works of Romanians in exile. The library was not only an archive or a bibliographical centre; it also published a bulletin and other works of national literature and collected not only written works but also art, fabrics, photographs and other materials related created by Romanian authors. Without this library, a huge part of our culture might have been lost or, at least, a lot harder to reach. It was and still is an example of what a library might be: a beacon of hope in times of despair, censorship and radicalisation.

Notes

[1] In original (Romanian): "Putea România să reziste? Puteau societatea românească și factorii politici să se opună în mai mare măsură decât au făcut-o? N-au rezistat cu mai mult succes nici țări care în deceniile următoare aveau să-i dea de furcă într-adevăr comunismului (Ungaria în 1956, Cehoslovacia în 1968, Polonia... mai tot timpul). În această primă fază, presiunea a fost mult prea mare. Nimic nu s-ar fi putut opune tăvălugului sovietic".

[2] In original (Romanian): "Ea va deveni principala instituție a statului român în perioada următoare, instaurând un control plenar, politic partizan și pe deplin interesat asupra societății, de la armată la presă, de la cultură la viață politică și economică".

[3] In original (Romanian): "... care formal sunt conduse de un președinte ales, dar care în realitate sunt stăpânite de câteva sute de familii de mari bancheri, mari industriași și conducători de monopoluri capitaliste. Ea este o nouă formă de stat, deoarece nu numai în comparație cu monarhia, dar și în comparație cu orice republică burgheză, republica populară reprezintă un pas înainte în evoluția socială".

[4] In original (Romanian): "Înțeleg prin sovietizare acel proces mimetic de introducere a unui model sovietic în toate domeniile societății: în politică, economie, cultură, habitat și viață intelectual-științifică. Deceniul sovietizării este un deceniu tampon, de tranziție între realitatea postbelică, la mijlocul anilor 40 și cea a regimurilor cuomuniste consolidate și recunoscute la nivel internațional, la mijlocul anilor 50. Acest proces mimetic a fost comun tuturor țărilor din zonă, chiar dacă el a avut viteze și manifestări particulare în fiecare din ele".

[5] In original (Romanian): "... tipărirea de tiraje de masă a clasicilor marxism-leninismului, a literaturii beletristice realist-socialiste, a diverselor lucrări de propagandă (politică, culturală, științifică de nuanță ateistă etc.), precum și a manualelor școlare".

[6] In original (Romanian): "La începutul anilor '50, după naționalizări, expropieri, evacuări din case, arestări, internări în colonii de muncă, concedieri ș.a.m.d., elita bucureșteană (amestecul de aristocrați, burghezi, intelectuali) devenise trecut. Puținele tentative de a conserva ceva din ce fusese (atmosfera, relațiile, obiceiurile, ierarhiile) ni se par astăzi dramatice și inutile. Vechea elită era o lume condamnată să dispară. Una din puținele forme care rămăseseră au fost întâlnirile cu un caracter oarecum regulat din unele case. [...] Unii își imaginau că regimul comunist va dura câțiva ani [...] Alții [...] continuau să-și ducă existența simulând niște forme de rezistență (imaginare)".

[7] In original (Romanian): "Elitele antebelice se regrupau în forme firave, anticamere ale pușcărilor, lagărelor, refugiului, clandestinității și exilului. Când nu ale morții. Societatea civilă și -a trait ultimele clipe în aceste saloane, grupuri de prieteni, cenacluri literare".

[8] In original (Romanian): "Anii 1948-1955 au marcat cea mai sălbatică perioadă din istoria României, când sutelor de mii de arestări li s-a adăugat o crimă intelectuală: asasinarea culturii naționale prin aplicarea în literatură, artă și școli a realismului socialist. [...] Cenzura se aplica nu numai operelor, ci și persoanelor. Dintre toți marii interziși, Blaga a avut soarta cea mai tragică, iar exterminarea sa poetică și filosofică a fost, de fapt, colateral, exterminarea a mii de virtuali cititori ai operelor pe care nu le-a mai scris".

[9] In original (Romanian): "În atmosfera înăbușitoare, două sute de scriitori și tot atâția oameni de artă și știință vor emigra în Occident. Sunt lucruri de care va trebui să se țină seama atunci când se va scrie o istorie a rezistenței românești prin cultură".

[10] In original (Romanian): "Bibliotecarii din lumea satelor trebuie să se considere propagandiști și agitatori în lupta pentru transformarea socialistă a satului".

[11] In original (Romanian): "Sunt recuperate documente începând din anul 1944 [...] până în 1989, când se mai emiteau instrucțiuni, dispoziții despre bibliotecile care au dreptul să dețină fond documentar ori special, liste cu cărți epurate, liste cu autori plecați în exil, note ale ministerelor implicate în procesul epurării, ultimul document fiind o adresă a Consiliului Culturii și Educației Socialiste din 9 iulie 1989, privind retragerea unor cărți din circuitul lecturii și o anexă ce cuprinde 152 de autori, majoritatea plecați în exil".

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