

IOAN STANOMIR, ANGELO MITCHIEVICI, *Comunism, inc. Istorii despre o lume care a fost*. București: Ed. HUMANITAS, 2016; IOAN STANOMIR, ANGELO MITCHIEVICI, *Communism, inc. Stories about a world that was*. Bucharest: Ed. HUMANITAS, 2016

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Writing about communism is actually one of the main directions of the Romanian intellectuals, not only due to the fact that it is a political regime integrated in our recent history, but also due to its capacity to be a great source of inspiration for „philosophical lessons”. Communism was the dominant ideology of the entire XXth century and it left its scars on the daily life of many generations. Communism was a totalitarian ideology that changed the society in all its areas: social and political structures, professional and moral rules and values, education and culture. The Romanian cultural field is particularly analyzed by most authors because it has, after the fall of communism, two distinct faces: one that fits the period before 1945 and featured by total freedom of creation, in which there were more literary and artistic currents, and the second fitted in the post-war period, in the communist era, which was characterized by censorship, terror and ideological domination. Ioan Stanomir and Angelo Mitchievici analyze, in this collection of essays, the intellectual resistance against communist ideology, in the 1948-1965 years, trying to disseminate the main features of this attitude. It is an approach for recovery of a *dark era*, in which the freedom of speech was only an illusion for most of elevated people.

I. Structure and main ideas of the book

As Stelian Tănase argued, „the fall of communist regimes in the Central and Eastern Europe made possible, for the first date, a deeply analysis of these regimes, of changes suffered by their societies in the post-war” (Tănase, 1998). After returning to democracy, the public space and cultural market of Romania was invaded by many studies and research on the communist regime and its impact on society. Some of these

books have a historical perspective; other books have the social and political evolutions as the main theme; other works are written in a nostalgic spirit, evoking the advantages of Communism and blaming the new democratic order.

But from this large diversity of themes and orientations on debating Romanian Communism, the cultural dimension has enjoyed a special attention. Beyond the tractors and satellites, it's worth noting that the Communists were also building their people by exercising strict control over the national culture. Indeed, the real flavor of Communism can more readily be experienced through its cultural expressions rather than its production schedules. Since culture and society were dominated by the ideology of proletarian internationalism, the freedom of creation and expression was very limited. The culture with its variety of forms and manifestations, is recognized as a fundamental component of a nation. All the cultural production is valuable only if it is the result of creation freedom. In this sense, any limit imposed to the cultural activity have clear negative consequences. A main idea of the reviewed book is the large and aggressive domination of the Romanian Communist Party not only on social life, but also on cultural production, and a major effect was a dramatic „closure” of the whole society.

The book recently published by Ioan Stanomir and Angelo Mitchievici has a great mission – remembering the „obsessive decade” of the 1950s and the „internal exodus” of a majority of intellectuals. As we know, in that period all the culture people in Romania had to choose between the material advantages of political regime – at the expense of their liberty of creation, and the alternative to retire in a virtual world and condemn the abuses of Communism. Obviously, the second variant was preferable but there were some notable exceptions, for example Mihail Sadoveanu who was simultaneously a great writer and an important member of Communist institutions. So, this book presents in an original manner the intellectual's interior adventure in a possible world that satisfied their needs to be absolutely free. „More over than any other period from our modernity, communism meant a capacity test for intellectuals to assume their own condition in the face of power and its instruments. Disposals, compromises, eulogy of tyranny, but also the courage to freely write are part of this road starting at 23 August 1944” (Stanomir & Mitchievici, 2016: 11).

The book is structured in two parts. The first part includes a series of essays written by Angelo Mitchievici on the theme of „the obsessive decade” in the 1950s. Some important and suggestive chapters, based on themes of reflections, are: „Realismul socialist si critica decadentei” („Socialist realism and the critique of decadence”), „Obsedantul deceniu, marea dezbatere si criza sacrificială” („Obsessive decade, great debate and sacrificial crisis”) „Marea dezbatere: în căutarea comunismului cu față umană” („Great debate:

in search of Communism with human face”). Angelo Mitchievici analyzes here the evolution of Romanian literature in this decade and extracts some relevant conclusions. The second part of the volume contains the contribution of Ioan Stanomir, having the beginning of cultural aggression and its consequences as main subject; „1947: Începutul” („1947: The Beginning”), „Acasă sau despre începutul exilului” („Home or about the beginning of exile”), „Vedere de pe pod sau despre memoria intelectuală” („View from the bridge or on the intellectual memory”) and „Litera stacojie” („Scarlet letter”) are significant essays to read and reflect.

As the authors say, „in the center of the volume are the decades that separate the moment of 23 August 1944 from the false turning operated by Dej. In reality, simultaneously with the death of Dej and ascension of Nicolae Ceausescu, an essential fact come to change the autochthonous intellectual profile. Relaxation of terror and simulation of a shy pluralism are the strategies through the regime make a new pact with writers, a pact through which they gain the sphere of aesthetics’s autonomy. It is a limited and severely controlled sphere, and any overtaking of the framework is punished. Group movements and solidarities can not survive. But the inner exile, as a widespread phenomenon, tends to disappear, because accomodation with the political regime is the dominant option” (Stanomir & Mitchievici, 2016:11).

Concretely, it approaches the evolutions of Romanian literature in the early Communism of the 1950s. „The book recovers not only the area of the official literature, imagined as an appendix of the propaganda, but also the enigmatic and protean territory of the inner emmigration. Inner exile – we are indebted to the Virgil Nemoianu’s suggestions – is the space within it formulates an ethic and aesthetic alternative to dogma and canon. More or less political in its attitudes, inner exile is the island where various spirits are found, with various aesthetic options, coming from different generations” (Stanomir & Mitchievici, 2016:11). The period between 1948 and 1965 has experienced a gradual dislocation of the Romanian culture, in terms of institutions and ideology, and a replacement with books, manuals, theses, ideas and structures transplanted from Moscow, with Soviet models. It is the period where the Romanian culture, especially the literature, was effectively replaced with a proletcultist structure and ideas, in which center was the Communist Party, the Marxist ideology and the foundation of a society based on the „new people”, away from its origins. It was a real „Holocaust” of national literature, in which the previous cultural elite was eliminated and marginalized, an era in which Romania lived under the aggression of a foreign cultural model, aiming destruction of the historical memory and Sovietization of the institutions, education and society.

II. Literature and politics. Recovery of an era

In the historical context covered by this book, the space of social and philosophical thought was completely monopolized by the Marxist ideology, in its Stalinist version, and the modern Romanian thought with its most elevated expressions, was considered, without exception, as being idealistic, conservative and reactionary.

Giving literature as example, Angelo Mitchievici explains the negative consequences of the Socialist realism's introduction in Communist Romania. „Socialist realism is practically unknown to the inter-war Romania, and for communist Romania is a sovietic imported product. It does not exist any literary tradition that announce the appearance of the socialist realism in Romania, there are no literary critics interested in this area. The theory of socialist realism is formulated in the Soviet Union after the appearance of term *per se*, in the 1930s, an important contribution having Maxim Gorki” (Stanomir & Mitchievici, 2016: 12-13).

Through the approaches of political sciences, Stanomir and Mitchievici argue that „*Comunism, inc.* is the answer that authors wanted to offer to some of their contemporaries, tempted by progressist and communist illusions. Condemning the liberal and democratic anti-communism is a fashion that brings immediate popularity in the spheres that are fed by the utopizant and morally ambiguous legacy of the radical left. (...) Contrary to this more and more vocal and influential direction, reaffirmation of the imperative of freedom and memory is a legitimate and necessary option. Sacrificing the human dignity of a single individual, in the name of an Promethean ideal, compromise the entire edifice that new communists adore. The communist past is not gone, it still comes to haunt us”. In this sense, we have the opinion that in contemporary Romania we are spectators to an economic liberalization without political reforms; it is a hybrid situation that can not produce any positive effects. But the liberty of cultural creation is a warranty for the resistance of the national spirit faced with globalization. Surely, the idea of a *trial of communism* has many followers, but the Romanian cultural space is divided yet between more factions.

From the perspective of social behaviours, we can link this book with the research of Daniel David on Romanian's psychology. After the fall of Communism, the intellectual elites felt a difference regarding the social and cultural liberty, but at the level of entire society, the lack of civic engagement is a problem that is worth discussing more.

In our opinion, the Romanian literature is certainly the most valuable area of culture, with a cultural legacy traversing all centuries. This book wants to be a tribute for that spectrum of intellectuals opposed to all totalitarian ideologies. Recovering the period of cultural Stalinism in Romania is not only an intellectual work or a doctorate theme (as we actually can see), it is a philosophical exercise that involves objectivity and rationality.

Literature:

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