

SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS - 19TH CENTURY IMPACT ON THE ROMANIAN DIPLOMAT-WRITERS-

Adrian Petre POPESCU
popescusibiu@yahoo.com

EXPERT UCEE BRUXELLES – ROMANIA

ABSTRACT

Along the years of its existence as a modern European country, Romania has had the chance of being represented by some scholars that not only had contributed to the country's international recognition but also brought value to its history, literature, to its culture. One of these personalities was Duiliu Zamfirescu, a diplomat writer. If we take a closer look at Duiliu Zamfirescu's human confessions, diplomat's experiences, traveller's impressions, we find out that they prove a vivid eye and sensibility, which requires reconsideration of his image in the consciousness of many contemporaries and posterity. He was a true advocate for Romania's literature and diplomacy, defending the ideals of the Romanians by using specific means and/or similar diplomatic approaches. In this study we will present some of his writings in which the novelist gives us the complex image of the Romanian society at the end of the nineteenth century.

Keywords

Cultural accumulation, ideological movement, diplomatic approaches, diplomat-writer

1. Introduction

Since the second half of the nineteenth century cultural accumulation created the favourable picture to lay the foundations of a Romanian nation interested in finding its identity by an intellectual and political-diplomatic, modern – European, composed of spirits extremely varied as education and social representation, an elite united by the faith to fulfil a historic mission. We can also define it as a reformist elite composed of personalities from different cultural registers: historical, literary, teachers, journalists, and

so on, which have re-scaled the Romanian culture. It was the moment when the force of ideological movement revolved mainly around the literary society *Junimea* and the magazine *Convorbiri literare* (*Literary Conversations*) where young people gathered back in the country after completing their studies abroad. They are advocates for critical thinking in the Romanian culture, those who have played an important role not only in channeling Romanian literature on their own path, to modernization of the Romanian grammar and unification of

Romanian culture, but also to defend the ideals of the Romanians – using specific means and/or similar diplomatic approaches. It is a period during which Junimist aristocracy increases, by moving the magazine *Convorbiri* from Iași to Bucharest, where some of the Junimists embrace the conservative ideology which subsequently leads to new literary directions and guidelines, literary pursuits will find echo and correspondence in prolific approaches to the Romanian diplomatic space. Therefore, we invoke the synchronization of pro-German junimists and pro-French modernism with the diplomatic environmental policy from the centres with old cultural traditions, effects that go off in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In addition, we find that Romanian literati of the post forty-eight period worked in foreign diplomatic circles as more of the delegates-patriots because according to official records the first Romanian legations and consulates appear only after 1843. Respecting the historical thread, we can say that post forty-eighters from the period of Cuza – have called for the establishment of the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* [1], when it followed, in 1863, the establishment of the diplomatic Agency in Belgrade [2] and since 1873, the establishment of diplomatic Agencies [3]. Practically from this moment we witness an exchange of responsibility, when the generation of forty-eighters literati-diplomats leaves the contingent of 1918 – the witness of creating the Greater Romania, event that, metaphorically speaking, confines the “liquidation process” of the nineteenth century.

2. Duiliu Zamfirescu and the Boxer revolution

Among the enlightened who will hand the responsibility to the new contingent of diplomatic writers there is also Duiliu Zamfirescu. When we talk about him we also talk about the world of Tănase Scatiu – simply presented as interests, games, dirty business, in a guide for similar circumstances beyond the times – a character who not only

overshadowed the other characters of Comănești cycle, but also that of the author. “*Not being a great novelist, Duiliu Zamfirescu deserves praise for the subtlety of certain analyses*” [4]. In this note – not too convincing – George Călinescu ends his two and a half pages of critical notes reserved for Zamfirescu. However, reading the most important creations left for posterity, Duiliu convinces us once again that he is one of those writers who have not aged at all, rather more we discover his diplomatic valences. A unique portrait of aforementioned writer – diplomat was left to us by the Junimist Nicolae Petrașcu [5], his friend from the days of youth, who, seeing him after years of parting says: “*The age of 50 years [...] has made from the old poet a positive man, for whom the demands of real life had something imperative and the diplomatic forms of life had a kind of rigidity*” [6]. Zamfirescu certainly proves a political judgment and finesse of the diplomatic vision, well sealed in the public consciousness. For instance, in 1907, a shortly after returning home, at the end of a long diplomatic placement, Duiliu finds himself in front of the peasant revolt. Surprisingly, he reacts like a paternalistic gentleman and goes, despite a hostile framework, to advise the peasants “*to be wise*”. Two years later, in his coming-back speech (16 May 1909) given by the writer in the auditorium of the Romanian Academy about the *Poporanism in literature* [7], Duiliu Zamfirescu requires the state to send to the villages masters and workshops, offering those willing to work “*the opportunity to get rich*”. As they say, Duiliu Zamfirescu was a co-operative *avant la lettre*, if we consider that the manifesto of Ion Mihalache “*Peasant current and nationalism*”, will appear much later. Of real, even striking actuality, are however, the diplomat’s considerations driving on the status of politics when his life was nearing its end. The diplomat with impressive career longevity does not hesitate to write, courageously and rationally about the apparent generosity of

the great powers for the fate of Romania: *“At our borders, cataclysm is haunting with fury. Two of the kingdoms which keep under their ties Romanian provinces have clashed and in this tooth and nail war, each of them are calling us for help, promising us that every Romanian province that the other kingdom holds [...] – a disturbing premonition of Duiliu Zamfirescu’s message and creed, which also said that – [...] our riches are pursued by the civilized world with growing interest and that it is up to us that this interest does not take other character than that of a balanced cooperation between foreign capital and domestic products from which state’s sovereignty does not come impaired [...]”* [8]. Personality appreciated in his time, a member of the European Danube Commission, Duiliu Zamfirescu has also been a member of the *Literary Society Junimea* (1883), corresponding member (1898) and holder (1908) of the Romanian Academy, where he also held the position of vice-president until 1918. Returned home, he serves as secretary-general of the Foreign Ministry and after the war he was appointed foreign minister in Averescu’s government. Parallel with the diplomatic activity, he is an avid of literature, his creations including lyrical romantic, pagan hymns, stories, translations, correspondence, novels of social and typology observation. He wrote poetry, short stories, plays, but the most important contribution to Romanian literature remains the *Comăneștenilor* cycle, novels written away from the country, in Rome, when the author was seconded to the Romanian Legation in Italy. Combined, these creations are the first novel-cycle in Romanian literature, which we find similarity with the works of novelist Emile Zola, especially *Les Rougon – Macquart*, which constitutes a romantic historical cycle, mystical and tragic, describing events before the French revolution until 1852. Compared to the 20 novels of Zola (flooded with more than 300 characters), the five volumes of the junimist, even if they do not have the magnitude of the French novelist’

work, are peppered with characters who dispute their right to represent us, for which we would categorize the five volumes as samples of behaviour which also touch the diplomatic dimension. To this volume we also attach the first epistolary novel in our literature *Lydda* through which the novelist gives us the complex image of the Romanian society at the end of the nineteenth century, the first Romanian novel of ideas [9], Duiliu Zamfirescu thus putting the Romanian novel in tune with the at European novel. This last mentioned novel is a confession and an analysis, romantically “engraved”, on a typological triangle, that, through the three characters, expresses three different views (reality – Mircea, art – *Lydda*, philosophy – old Filip), who face the absolute (death), from one and the same perspective (mental balance). The three points melt in Masonic symbolism and this is no wonder because Duiliu Zamfirescu was also an influential initiated, who, according to documents from the *Brotherhood*, was received in the *Lodge Star of Romania* in Iași, in early 1867, where he soon manages to receive the degree of Companion. Based on this initiation, during special moments of his career, he uses in the messages, addressed to some brethren, the Masonic language, encrypted in the literary and diplomatic language. In this respect attention is also drawn upon us by the following diplomatic correspondence: *“Dear Sir Văcărescu Whether St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, St. John Chrysostom, St. John Climacus, St. John of Damascus and all kings and Holy Fathers of our Holy Church of the East, John II Comnenus, John III Duca, John IV Lascaris (sorry, my ancestor) and many other kings and queens, Jean sans terre (et surtout celui avec des terres), Jean le brave etc.etc. to unite the spirit and graces, so that the successor of Văcărești live many happy years, together with the respectful and dignified wife, Ma’am Frosa, with their daughter Elena wedge of gold, Zoe Caribolli, with their son-in-law, future descendant of Earth heroes. With great humility and great*

pleasure we received our descendants and I, those sweet things you kindly send us on at Holy Basil, – therefore, we thank you. Soon we hope to have the honour of seeing You, for us to talk about interpretations of Mihalachi Vodă's heirs. With love and privilege Your good friend Duiliu Zamfirescu. Sunday" [10], a text which we examine, not for the jovial tone between Zamfirescu and the diplomat John Văcărescu, but for decoding the purposes of writing this diplomatic greeting, beyond the ludicrous character in which he enumerates the saints, emperors and kings. Therefore, the mentioning of "St. John Climacus", which is actually St. John of the Scărarul (the ladder man) – Climax, is a reference to the seven-steps scale (this time a double scale) of the initiation of Knight Kadosh, whose significance is compared by Welsh Henry with the initiatory Order tradition – Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, where reference is made to the Mysterious Scale [11]. Zamfirescu, by the reference of "St. John Climacus" exhorted his friend to an incursion into a practice of search, in a world that does not reveal its charm at first sight – a mystic practice through which Masons reveal hidden stone. We are talking about the *Symbol of Wisdom*, a stone which has engraved on one side seven virtues (Oheb Eloah – the love of God) and on the other side the seven liberal arts (Oheb Kerobo – love of neighbour). We thus decipher, together with the Masonic sign, other messages that appear in early writings sent by Duiliu Zamfirescu. The writer also sends to diplomat John Văcărescu [12] data/information about the monastic virtues – identical to classical theology. As such, seemingly under the trivial reason for a diplomatic stay – that he spends in Italy – he uses, almost obsessively, the Byzantine name *Lascaris*. De facto, Zamfirescu uses this framework to alert diplomat Văcărescu that he is in a situation similar to that experienced by the Byzantine emperor Constantine Lascaris, i.e. the period in which he quickly lost authority and

influence, a situation which in the opinion of the issuer of the letter should be avoided quickly by the recipient. In the letter – card, Duiliu Zamfirescu also comes in addition with another passage in which, this time, targets the Freemason John Văcărescu's son-in-law, the unnamed colonel Mihail Caribol, which was regarded by the writer as "*the future descendant of earthly heroes*". Thus, Duiliu Zamfirescu warns him once more that during the trip to Italy (n.n. described the narrator with great fidelity and honesty) had found that "*the future successor of earthly heroes*" would lose confidence in the environments known by the two of them. To highlight where the trouble came from, Duiliu Zamfirescu used the phrase "*interpretations of Mihalachi Woda's heirs*", a cryptic formula worthy of Mateiu Caragiale. The word "Voda" is spelled with a "W" (uppercase), which crowns the princely monogram. Associating the word Voda with capital "W" which replaces the capital "V", Duiliu is using a new cryptogam. In fact, the word "Voda" defines three qualities: great, prince and Christian, which resembles to the trident of letter "W" angled differently, so as to form an "E" (by rotation of 90°) and an "M" (by a 180° rotation). Taking into account the fact that the letter "W" in Hebrew is the symbol of the figure 6, figure showing the six points of the Star of David - star where Kabbalah is composed of two triangles which are the inherent dichotomy of man (good versus evil, spiritual versus physical) – we can deduce that Duiliu Zamfirescu, through the princely monogram "W", recommends his brethren John Văcărescu to meditate on those discovered in order to make the wisest and urgent decision. The initiation of Zamfirescu reverberates both in some materials he writes as a journalist (see when he was editor of *Romania liberă* or when he collaborated on the *Romanian Athenaeum*, the *Romanian Journal*, the *Idealistic Journal* and especially the *Romanian Literature and Art*), and in the position of secretary of legation (either during the period in Rome

«1888-1906», Athens «1892» or Brussels «1892-1894»). Thus, during the time spent in Rome he is concerned about the national character in art, in search of the “traditionalist” genesis, as he will confess to Titu Maiorescu, in the letter sent on November 18th, 1905. *“It’s funny – will write Duiliu to Titu Maiorescu – how it unnaturally occurred to most of us the belief that the Romanian society has no character. Faith is false; as is false the belief that we do not have an architecture, a style of our own. Surely the distinctive features of this society are not as obvious as the English ones, for instance; surely that the buildings of the past leave very few signs of what could be, but still, they are. It’s impossible for them to not be. For what else is the character in psychology or architecture if not the development towards a steady and consistent direction? If we largely take the evolution of our people and our society, we must admit that ancestry, political happenings, defence needs, nature of soil, climate, have imprinted something constant and consistent into the Romanian souls – houses or shacks in which they lived Romanians”* [13].

From the letters and chancellery materials our attention was drawn, among other things, upon how the narrated in the country the “Boxer Revolution” events from China, where the spirit of solidarity and humanity prevail. Even if at that time there were no diplomatic relations between Romania and China, and there did not exist any Romanian Legation in Beijing, Romania had legations in the capitals of the European powers involved in the events in China, and Romanian diplomats, responsive and on the job, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the concerns and struggles of the officials there. If from Paris and London, the information come from the two plenipotentiary ministers, namely: Grigore I. Ghika and Ion

Bălăceanu, informing the Romanian minister for foreign affairs (during the months of July, August and October 1900), Alexander Marghiloman about the French and British governments’ decision to stop arms exports to China, from the capital of Italy (July, 12th 1900), the writer-diplomat Duiliu Zamfirescu gave evidence of the Italian Foreign Minister’s speech, the Marquis de Visconti Venosta, uttered in the Senate, in which the speaker urged the audience to accept the formation of a body of international expedition, that would be sent to China, for the advantage of besieged civilians.

3. Conclusions

We may conclude after this report that when we refer to Duiliu Zamfirescu’s human confessions, diplomat’s experiences, traveler’s impressions, they prove a vivid eye and sensibility, which requires reconsideration of Zamfirescu’s image in the consciousness of many contemporaries and posterity, being seen usually as a character excessively formal, arrogant, with aristocratic claims. The study of the problems’ phenomenology of international relations and cyclic convulsions between them, based on the work of this actor of the Romanian diplomatic and cultural environment, strengthens the idea that Romanians’ habitat has been and will remain a geostrategic space put under the pressure between East and West, a space always in an economic crisis mainly due to the slowness to adapt to the dynamics and organizational formulas from developed countries, gaps that those who served the diplomatic environment in the nineteenth century (mainly the literati) tried to compensate by international relationship skills and by the illuminist culture to put Romania if not under international attention at least in its sphere of interest, without sacrificing national ideals.

References

1. On the 20th of June, 1862.
2. It was the first diplomatic agency founded by Romania, having an official character, recognized both by the host country and by the other powers that had representatives in Belgrad.
3. The 1st diplomatic agency was opened in Rome having as main objective getting the independence of Romania.
4. George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*, (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1982), 189.
5. Former attache to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1885), head of cabinet of P.P. Carp (1888), the Secretary of the legation in Paris (1889), then in Istanbul (1890) was the elder brother of the painter Gheorghe Petrașcu. Appears in official documents under the name of Petrovici.
6. Nicolae Petrașcu, *Duiliu Zamfirescu*, (Craiova: Cultura Națională Publishing House, 1929, 10.
7. Adrian Fochi, *Miorița – tipologie, circulație, geneză, texte*, (Bucharest: Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1964), 141.
8. Șerban Cionoff, “Duiliu Zamfirescu: personaj și personaje”, *Jurnalul Național*, (Wednesday, July 15, 2009).
9. *Revista Fundațiilor* 13, 4, New Series, (April, 1946): 772-784.
10. Mihai Sorin Rădulescu, “O epistolă de la Duiliu Zamfirescu”, *România Literară* 30, (September 3, 2007): 18-19.
11. Henry Welsh, *Le Pèlerin sur l’Echelle. Les Architectes de la Connaissance, Conflans-Sainte-Honorine*, (Editions Ivoire-Clair, 2007).
12. *Who was Noticed as an Officer during the War of 1877*.
13. Al. Săndulescu, *Duiliu Zamfirescu, Scrisori inedite*, (Bucharest: R.S.R. Academy Publishing House, 1967), 175-176.