

BOOK REVIEW

Cioacă, Vlad Ovidiu. 2019. *Viața cotidiană în România comunistă*. Craiova: Beladi&Sitech

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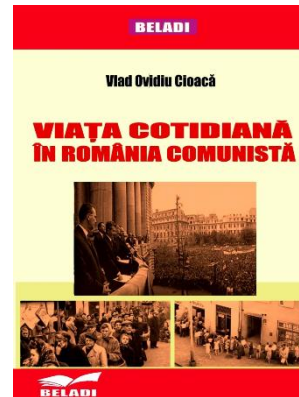
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The change of ideological paradigm in December 1989, beyond the inevitable controversies, generated impressionist writings and continues to generate, after three decades, writings of very special profiles: from the testimonies of direct participants in the Event, to alleged “objective” analyzes of “foreign” citizens present in Romania “by accident”, to those who have a critical position on the opportunity and meaning of that change, just when our country had “escaped” the burden of external debt, with all the blackmail exercised by foreign creditors and the geopolitical courts of that historical time.

Unlike all these, which can be suspected of emotional contagion, the work *Everyday life in communist Romania* by the academic Mr. Vlad Ovidiu Cioacă offers us a *first sociological perspective on the phenomenology of the evolution of the Romanian social space prior the December social explosion* sketching the context of living conditions during the social experiment of Soviet-type socialism, as a possible etiology of the collapse of the totalitarian development regime, which has remained in history under the name “development dictatorship”. We would like to mention: Soviet-type socialism, in order to temper the perplexity of some self-titled “experts” of the science of communism, who cannot overcome the Manichaeism operated by the Bolshevik paradigm - either socialism or capitalism; there is no third way of development! - who do not understand why the Chinese Communist Party proposed at the 19th Congress the construction of Chinese socialism, by 2040, as China was declared world leader in development by the international courts (2019), and the Chinese Communist Party, instead of collapsing from power, becoming the world’s largest capitalist, with the largest foreign exchange reserves in the world! This is a reality that summons us all, with or without social culture, to switch the emphasis from the triumphalism of December 1989 to an assumed lucidity, typical of the scientific approach.

This is the first difference and the sui-generis quality of the text written by the academic in Craiova: an exemplary epistemic framing, through which it becomes possible to assess all the parameters related to the thematic area of the approached subject.

Taken out of the minor perimeter of common knowledge, in the area of which the affective coloration produces errors either through pious nostalgia or through vindictive outbursts with inflections of verbal violence, the point of interest centered on the specifics of daily life during communist rule recovers, for posterity, the collective



memory of a historical time marked by the contradiction between the alleged “irreversible historical movement”, programmatically assumed by the communists, and the relativity of everyday life, lived at the limit of the reversibility of welfare hopes promised at the beginning of the project of “new life”, equality, social and national justice.

In order not to fall into the temptation of any questionable kind of subjectivism, the author operates a necessary distinction between ideology, political regime and social system, to separate itself from the pattern of the public approach of communist government as a monochromatic, monotonous and equal process in its evolution from the beginning to the end by historical implosion.

If historians have launched in the profile literature an endless inventory of affections, glazed with a factology without historical valences, from which the tectonic faults of the social ontology cannot be seen, the young sociologist Vlad Ovidiu Cioacă takes an attitude towards the minor historiography of the subject in order to achieve a necessary clearing of confusions and prejudices of social hermeneutics in this case. Through the semantic diopters of sociological concepts, the social and human project of communist government appears to the author as a simple social experiment, without the drama of ideological struggles that accompanied him not only during its development, but also long after; it is not hazardous that the emotional implications of the televised, online or written debates have still not been extinguished...

In these coordinates, the involvement of millions of subjects in building a better and fairer society than the extreme social polarization in which they lived is presented as an acceptance of a collective hope, in the area of which no signs of guilt can be found, neither then nor now, three decades after the end of the experiment in question. The author does not personalize the actors and does not aim to establish the concrete responsibilities of the main decision-makers, but treats everything with lucid objective awareness of epistemic superiority, from the level of principle, with the intention to explain the genesis and dynamics of the social system generated by ideology and manifested in the regime of communist government.

It is not the *description* that is important (this is the preferred approach of historians), but the **explanation** of the social space under the socialization of the economic, institutional and spiritual foundations of the new social system, led by the alliance of workers and peasants, the essence of power and communist government. The complexity of the methodology used, the consistency of the explanatory models and the eloquence of the expression demonstrate the author’s vocation and experience in the field of social theory and investigation.

The insertion of conversations with individuals from different social strata, who lived, more or less, effectively, during the communist government, is a recourse to the anchors of credibility of their own discourse; it is not a call to empirical factology to have starting points for generalizations or abstractions. The exploration of the perception of the idea of socialism by the elderly, but also by representatives of the young generation, has a precise purpose: to evaluate the idea of the values of socialism, considered by Western propaganda as a great historical error. “A social system, however, cannot be good or bad through sentences given by science.” This is not the duty of science. Science has the obligation to explain the genesis and effects generated by the political regimes that articulated the social space, in the way it appears to the social researcher.

Being an important work, the book of the academic from Craiova is also a great performance of the team coordinated by the Great Senior of Romanian sociology, prof. Univ. dr. Dumitru Otovescu, from the Doctoral School of Social and Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Craiova.

Instead of conclusions, the academic from Craiova, who is also talented at literature, formulates some seemingly esopian but memorable thoughts: namely, if, on the free stage of Time, it is mandatory to play a role, as actors, we can enter a historic play, a tragedy, a drama, or just a simple farce... Life, like History, does not ask us; it simply records. The generations that lived and worked during the communist government, that is, all the "builders of socialism", do not deserve the anathema of young people who, in a democracy, can put everything in derision. The duty of the post-December generations is to rebuild the social space in the area of a pragmatic freedom, not only declarative and vindictive.

The generations of the Bolshevik-type socialist experiment (except for the torturers!) could do no more; but we have no legitimacy to question their good intentions and efforts to take the country out of poverty. Their alliance, to those who have elevated work to the rank of state policy, started from the premise that it is possible to "build" a society commensurate with man; without God's blessing or help. The premise was false, and the whole result of their work quickly disappeared, leaving a bitter lesson: nothing cannot last without God! This is the truth, and all the other details are mere literature for the common people of the propagandists.

Let's look ahead and rebuild our resources as a people, in a new identity profile! Here is a goal that deserves much more attention than the sterile debates about the failures of the recent past or about some characters of dubious sociometric expansiveness...