

Dennis Deletant

The objective study of Communism in Romania was impossible in Romania before 1989 for reasons which are obvious: the ideological control by the Romanian Communist Party, the extremely limited contact with foreign scholars, and the lack of access to primary sources. But the collapse of Communism has opened the door to the study of this subject. Some of the achievements in this domain form the topic of this paper. I underline *some* because space does not allow me to present a comprehensive balance of the work of all the institutes, university departments, and of the scholars who have devoted themselves to the study of Communism in Romania. For the same reason I shall not cover the tens of relevant studies in the field published by non-Romanian-born specialists.

No survey of this kind would be taken seriously if it did not mention the work of the American of Romanian origin, Vladimir Tismăneanu. His book, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc*, provides a subtle analysis of the ideological and personal motivations which buttressed the Party and its propaganda and coercive structures. An achievement of equal value is represented by *Raportul Final al Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România*, a monumental study written by a team of scholars under Tismăneanu's direction. The purpose of this report was to provide a documentary basis for the condemnation of Communism by President Traian Bănescu, as representative of the nation, in December 2006.

In its four years under the direction of Marius Oprea, until February 2010, the activity of the Institute for Investigating the Crimes of Communism, has been notable for the detailed research carried out by its young researchers which have been published both as monographs and in the yearbooks of the institute. Oprea also deserves praise for his syntheses of the repression carried out by the Communist regime. At the same time, he had the courage to unravel the mechanisms by which the *Securitate* extended its tentacles into the deepest crevasses of power after 1990.

The Romanian Institute for Recent History was founded in 2001 on the initiative of Coen Stork, the former Dutch ambassador to Romania (1988-1993). The members of the academic council, which included both Romanian and foreign scholars, started from the premise that Romania needed a dynamic institute to investigate the period of authoritarian and totalitarian rule in Romania (1938-1989), an investigation which would contribute to the consolidation of the democratic process in Romania by encouraging an assumption of the past and a cultivation of transparency. The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) became the principal partner in the project, which was financed by a MATRA grant of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A leading role in the analysis of Communism in Romania is played by the National Council for the Study of the Archives of the Former *Securitate* (CNSAS). The CNSAS has taken the initiative of publishing a series of studies, based on the research carried out by its staff on the archive of *Securitate*, entitled *Arhivele Securității*, while eight years after its creation (in 1999), to launch the review *Caietele CNSAS*. Under the rigorous supervision of CNSAS vice-president Virgiliu Târău, the review has become a model and reference point for specialists in the field of Romanian communism, especially for those who study its repressive dimension.

Dorin Dobrințu, the director since 2007 of the National Archives of Romania (ANR), has worked tirelessly to widen access to documents relating to Communism in Romania and has succeeded, despite the efforts of less enlightened persons to frustrate his efforts.

An outstanding contribution has been made by the Civic Academy Foundation, founded in 1994 by Ana Blandiana and Romulus Rusan. Amongst its objectives are youth education, and in this regard, the restoration of the contemporary history of Romania which had been severely distorted under Communism. In this same year Rusan began the publication of the yearbook *Analele Sighet* which contains papers presented at the annual symposia organized by the Foundation at Sighetu Marmatiei. At the same time Rusan has produced under the Foundation's aegis numerous studies and volumes of documents. Through the dedication of Blandiana, Rusan and their colleagues at the Foundation the intrusive nature of the Communist regime has become better known both in Romania and elsewhere, especially through the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to those in the Resistance. This museum in Sighet prison is considered by many to be the most impressive and most eloquent museum of Communist repression in Europe, if not in the world.