

OTHERNESS AS A EUROPEAN DESTINY. INTERWAR ROMANIAN VIEWS ON THE EUROPEAN IDEA

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ABSTRACT

This paper summarises some of the interwar Romanian conceptions of the European idea, from its emotional heyday around 1918, to the exiled involvement in the building of the European consciousness and the conception of a new project for Europe after the Second World War (1947). It underlines the intrinsic European dimension of Romanian national identity building in relation to Romania's Eastern otherness, a Latin country placed at the very border between Western and Eastern cultures. The paper aims to document journalistic, academic, and diplomatic insights into the idea of Europe in interwar Romania, along with their reverberations within the exiled project of Romania's European continuity at the end of the Second World War.

Keywords: *Idea of Europe, Interwar Romania, Eastern Otherness, Federalism, Project of a United Europe.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Edgar Morin, conflict was at the basis of the rise of “European consciousness” after the Second World War, stating that previous “order” of Europe was in fact the “disorder of a tumultuous *chantier*” (Morin 2002 [1990]), 64) whereby European culture(s) and European civilisation had extended their influence throughout the world. A “common market of ideas” had emerged, and a “polycentric cultural Europe” (*ibidem*, 69) – this new “reality” of the continent – had started to transgress national borders and languages¹. With regard to interwar Romania, Adrian Marino claimed it had experienced a socio-cultural “spontaneous

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¹ Morin also noticed that the contemporary European pleiade of reference writers were writing in their languages, but they were all speaking “European”. (*Ibidem*, 17)



spiritual adhesion” to Europe, revealing the functioning of the “European model” (Marino 2005, 197) in the emerging nation-state. However, how Romania’s “total attachment to the European being” (*Ideea Europeană* 1919) was built still remains understudied², as are the terms and conditions related to this “spontaneous” adhesion to Europe.

The reference points of this study are the geographic and linguistic particularities of Romania³, as well as the active participation of Romanian intellectuals in the conceptualisation, cultural construction and institutionalisation (Mishkova 2018, 61–62) of Eastern Europe during the late 19th century. Starting from these observations, the paper discusses how a new particularity of “the Romanian case,” that is ‘Europeanness’, became an intrinsic dimension of the emerging national identity building after 1918. Then this paper explores the ways interwar Romanian elite achieved its alter-European destiny as a fundamental dimension of its national identity. More precisely, following theoretical approaches of Baudrillard and Guillaume (1994) as well as Neumann (1999), this paper explores how a culture of difference was integrated in the process of national identity building, thus creating a constitutive European dimension of Romanian identity. It focuses on dominant discourses (journalistic, academic, and diplomatic) shaping the public understanding of national identity in relation to Europe from 1918 until 1945.

METHODOLOGY

In order to complete this investigation, three sets of corpora are examined in this paper: the complete archives of the cultural weekly magazine “*Ideea Europeană*” (1919–1928), the scholar journal “*Revue de Transylvanie*” (1934–1944), and the writings of Grigore Gafencu⁴ prepared in exile during the Second World War.

² Thirty years after the fall of the iron curtain, it still remains difficult to access the complete archives of interwar Romania. The banned writings and memoirs were partly recovered and published relatively late, mostly during the 2000s. The same is true for the journalistic and academic productions of the interwar era.

³ Romania was considered “a borderline case” within the effort to define “East Center Europe” (Ash 1986, as quoted in I.B. Neumann 1999, 145).

⁴ Grigore Gafencu (1892–1957) studied Law at the University of Bucharest, was a hero of the Great War, and joined the Romanian Peasant Party. He is considered one of the most preeminent figures of Romanian diplomacy, given his roles as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1939 and 1940 when he obtained the Franco-British guarantee for Romania, and as Romanian Minister to the USSR until 22 June 1941. He is also well known for his writings and diplomatic activity in exile, during the war, and after the instalment of the communist rule to the East. His journalistic career was marked in Romania by the founding of the centre-left oriented newspaper *Timpul* [the Time] in 1937 and its consistent presence in the Western European newspapers and magazines.

Qualitative content analysis is applied to the three selected corpora, in order to point out the presence and the discursive developments of the Romanian conception on the idea of Europe as a major theme of public debate. Critical discourse analysis (CDA⁵) is used to link discourse, actors and society i.e., the discursive representation of social actors and the discursive construction of legitimation (see van Leeuwen 2008), as well as the social and historical conditions of discourse (Wodak, 1996, cited in Richardson 2007, 26). The topic is investigated at two levels: the superlative “judgments on the others” – the (Western) Europeans, and the “interactions with the others” (Todorov 1986, 7). At the first level of investigation, the paper shows that the different degrees of superlative attributions Europe gained in Romanian discourse, defining the Western (in fact mostly Franco-British) European model, correspond to the paradigm “Europe as an idea” (Hewitson and M. D’Auria 2012, 4). At the second level, it shows that the emergent representations of the Self (Romania, Romanians) as Other(s) of Europe were even more strongly generalised in the national public sphere. In line with the new European orientation “Europe as a project” (*idem*),

THE IDEA OF EUROPE AND ITS ROMANIAN “LABORATORIES” AFTER THE GREAT WAR

The Romanian interwar conception of the idea of Europe was built around Paul Valéry’s (2000 [1924], 414–425)⁶ fundamental question “*who, after all, is European?*” – which was simultaneously debated in the Romanian public sphere. In the context of Valéry’s reflection (2000 [1919], 405–414)⁷ on the European spiritual crisis, in which he postulated the existence of a European soul, a European spirit and a European culture, the anguish of the “End of Europe”, popular in

⁵ The methodological approach of CDA considers discourse as a form of representation of reality and comprising implicit and explicit references to other dominant public discourses (the variety of public discourses having a preeminent position in the public sphere, multitude that Bakhtin (1984) called “heteroglossia”) to be described and interpreted via the “dialogism” or intertextuality perspective also opened by Bakhtin (1986). The system of textual and discursive inter-relations which establishes within media discourses gives important indicators on the contextual variables (such as social, cultural, political and economic ones) influencing the evolution of the public discourse on a specific issue.

⁶ P. Valéry, *Note (ou l’Européen)*, Europe de l’antiquité au XXe siècle, (Bouquins collection, éditions Robert Laffont, 2000), 414–425. First published in *Revue Universelle*, 1924. This paper was first translated into Romanian at *Ideea Europeană* under a revealing title: “Homo Europaeus” (*I.E.*, no. 192, 15 October 1926, 2–3).

⁷ P. Valéry, *La crise de l’esprit*, Europe de l’antiquité au XXe siècle (Bouquins collection, éditions Robert Laffont, 2000), pp. 405–414. First published in English in *Athenaeus*, April-May 1919, London.

western societies, was initially discussed, then refuted⁸ in Romania, until the end of the Second World War.

Europe is omnipresent in the Romanian discourse of the era and acknowledged as a key dimension of the new nation state – Greatest Romania – constituted on 1 December 1918. The idea of Europe and the consequent emergent ideal(s) of Europe seem to naturally integrate the project of unitary identity building within the emergent nation-state. This direction was historically interpreted and deployed within the National Assembly of Alba Iulia, when Vasile Goldiș⁹, in his public discourse, placed “the Romanian element at the Eastern borders of the civilised world”¹⁰. Furthermore, while augmenting the social need of a publication dedicated to the idea of Europe, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru¹¹ posited the “exclusively European option of Romanians, living in between the East and the West”. The so-called European civilisation thus became the central point of a militant discourse during the interwar period in Romania, along with the will to preserve the union of all Romanians and Romanian territories under the flag of King Ferdinand.

After the Great Union, a genuine laboratory of ideas started to unite the militant from all the regions of the country. Distinguished professors of the universities of Iasi, Cluj, and Bucharest created schools of thought, research laboratories, and research methods for better investigating the new Romanian

⁸ “Even though the seeds from which the European civilization has flourished have their origins in Asia, we cannot say that, without the predestined earth of Europe, Asian gestures and insights could have become the acts and doctrines of today. However, we are reproducing Giovanni Papini’s article from *La Vera Italia* given the bluntness with which he opens the door of our origins. The author is known in his country as one of the most dense thinkers and the owner of a style as clear as the sky and as massive as a rock. *I.E.*” Intro signed *I.E.* to the article of G. Papini, “Paradox on Europe”, in *I.E.*, no. 20, 2 November 1919, 2.

⁹ Active militant for the rights of Romanians in Transylvania during the Austro-Hungarian rule, Vasile Goldiș (1862-1934) was awarded a Bachelor Degree in Arts after his studies at the Universities of Budapest and Vienna. He was a professor and a writer mostly interested in the history of Romania and the Latinity of Romanian people. In 1918, he was part of the Romanian Transylvanian Delegation which officially brought to Bucharest to King Ferdinand the Act of Union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania. He was eventually appointed member of the Directory Council of Transylvania.

¹⁰ Speech of Vasile Goldiș for the National Assembly of Alba Iulia, 1 December 1918. Retrieved online at <http://centenarulromaniei.ro/discursul-lui-vasile-goldis-de-la-alba-iulia-1-decembrie-1918/>

¹¹ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru (1868-1957) was a Romanian philosopher and psychologist, member of the Romanian Academy beginning in 1923 and later its president, from 1938 to 1941. He studied both Letters and Law at the University of Bucharest, and then he visited Vienna, Munich and Geneva. In the late 19th century, he was awarded a doctoral degree in Philosophy, after having completed training to the laboratory of Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig. Center-left oriented and a notorious Europeanist, he was prominent within the Romanian interwar public sphere, especially via public conferences, radio conferences, books, and magazines.

society¹², as well as scholar journals and intellectual publications. The latter became the most efficient tools for spreading the ideas and ideals of all these “laboratories”, along with public conferences¹³, public university courses, and frequent articles in the popular newspapers.

Constantin Rădulescu-Motru – the *Professor* or *our Patron* (Beldie 2005) – was the director of the weekly magazine *Ideea Europeană* (“the European Idea”), which was dedicated to the idea of Europe in interwar Romania. In his memoirs from the time he spent as editor-in-chief of this publication, Constantin Beldie spoke of a genuine “laboratory” (2005, 397)¹⁴ of original ideas and debates driven by “vitality, activism and anti-intellectualism” (*ibidem*, 380-381) and referred to the most precious “goods” it offered to the editorial team, that is, “the liberty and independence of our paper, small, but on its own” (*ibidem*, 398). The weekly periodical, which was widely respected at the time, allows for study of the decade of evolution of the idea of Europe in interwar Romania by capturing the spirit, feelings, and thoughts of the era. The entire corpora, consisting of 212 issues published in *grand format*, with four pages per issue, witnessed this evolution.

Rădulescu-Motru signed the programmatic article “Ideea Europeană” (*the European Idea*) (I.E. 1919, 1)¹⁵ on 22 June 1919. The paper underlined both the European vision and mission of the intellectual magazine – proposed as an occasion “for publically affirming the method of thinking which has helped us until now to discuss the current political and social facts” (*idem*). The author referred¹⁶ to the “larger horizon of the European Idea”, in order to clarify the social and political relations that Romania had with Europe. He then went on to explain the four stages of the Romanian relationship with Europe. The first step was in his opinion “the first phase of our sentimental politics” (around 1848), when Europe was seen as “a caregiver mostly preoccupied to find bedding for the young nations”; this phase corresponded with the main question of the era: “What would Europe think about...?”. The second phase or “the spiritual state of cheerful heirs” (under King Carol I) characterized by a personified Europe – the “loan shark” – illustrated the popular formula of the era: “We borrow, we borrow, we borrow”.

¹² Since the Great Union in 1918, the total population of the Romanian state has doubled.

¹³ The *Conferences of the European Idea*, for instance, were initiated in November 1920 by *Ideea Europeană* magazine and became very popular all across the country. They were mostly dedicated to the understanding of Western European ideas, ideologies, and thinkers.

¹⁴ In fact, the term used by C. Beldie is the one of “*ideator*” (a term probably created as a result of French linguistic influence, meaning a sort of laboratory, or incubator of ideas), with reference to Socrates’ experiences of philosophical speculations. (*Ibidem*, 397).

¹⁵ “IDEEA EUROPEANĂ”, *I.E.*, no. 1/22 (June 1919), 1.

¹⁶ “The European Idea has functioned in a unitary manner in all the Romanian regions, with their own regional particularities, but in accordance to the same system of thinking. The way that Romanian people discovered, adapted and formulated their own representation about ‘Europe’, via an act of spontaneous spiritual adhesion, was by itself the way of functioning of this ‘European model’.” (Marino 2005, 197).

Then, “by the end of our sentimental politics” (around 1919) Romanian relations with Europe had reached the “crossroads”¹⁷, and two possibilities emerged: “divinized Europe,” having the image of the goddess of Justice or “demonized Europe”, with the image of “Hypocrisy”. Finally, “the period of politics based on realities” is presented as a project for the future, possible only if “we realize that Europe is a reality, independent of our feelings – the first reality on the basis of our politics” (I.E. 1919, 1).

Europe was, then, seen as essential to the new state of Romania: “A nation cannot live without foreign policy. Especially our nation cannot live other than connected to the European being” (*idem*). To support the mission of the publication, the author proposed his vision about the ways of achieving the European desideratum: “to objectively study what is necessary in the relationship between things – and to leave aside the feelings, which are nothing else than changing reflexes of individual consciousness”, with the general objective of “helping to reinforce this sense of reality in our public consciousness”, coupled with the specific one of “contributing through this to a better orientation of our political life”. These converge in the apparent goal of the publication: “The EUROPEAN IDEA will have to keep alive, in the consciousness of our audience, this soul community on the basis of the European civilization”, while the motive behind the creation of the publication was a genuine interrogation at the end of the Great War: “how do we understand our dependency on the civilization of Europe?”¹⁸.

The conceptions of the idea of Europe appeared in the different columns of the periodical, mostly in the editorials (first page), “From the notebook of a traveller” (second page) or “Notes”¹⁹ (different chronicles of cultural events happening in Romania or in Europe on third page), and “Weekly review: facts and reviews from the country and from abroad” (fourth page). This last column usually entirely covered the last page and gave insights on European universities’ preoccupations, activities and research results, international reactions to the creation of the League of Nations and its activity, as well as recent national and

¹⁷ With direct reference to the Peace Conference negotiations (Paris, January 1919) and before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919), this anguish is a form of evaluation of the different expectations that Romania had at that time, among which the one of a European way would have meant to exclude “the sinister possibility” of becoming after the Great War “a cultural colony of a people [Russians], as powerful and glorious as it might be”.

¹⁸ The relationship between culture and civilisation in Europe is a central issue of Rădulescu-Motru’s writings. His belief was that culture and civilization were unequal, because civilization is a superficial reality of sorts that can be imitated, while culture has as central function to spiritually unify the peoples of Europe.

¹⁹ For instance, the article “PRESA” [the Press] (*I.E.*, no. 8/10 [August 1919], 3, signed under the pseudonym *Verax*) proposed a genuine auto-critical approach marked by an obsessive reference to the European standards not adequately observed in Romania. Concerning the pseudonym, it was used by various intellectuals of the period, but, based on the memoirs of C. Beldie and on the M. Straje notes, the paper was thought to have been authored either by Rădulescu-Motru (Straje 1973, 606) or by his university assistant Nae Ionescu, who also used this signature (see C. Beldie 2005, 186).

European publications. But maybe the most relevant observation about this column was its efforts to downplay the distance from Western Europe. For instance, one note is informing about the rise of the price of books in France and England, where “intellectuals are alarmed. After the food crisis, an intellectual one is announced. That means that **we** will write and read *less*, but hopefully, for this reason, *better!*”²⁰

A transversal theme is the need for reform—always with reference to western European models—especially in education, at the universities, in religion, and in the organization of the army or in public life in general, and the responsibility for its coordination is attributed to the intellectuals. In the only article signed by the editor-in-chief, C. Beldie, “Integrating Concentration. Intellectuals and the reform of our public life” (1927), he summarised the militant mission of the *Ideea Europeană* magazine, coming as a response (eight years after) to the paper “The Intellectuals” (1919) by C. Rădulescu-Motru. During this era, there were debates on important issues such as universal vote or public vote; parliamentary life (given the structure of the new Greatest Romania’s Parliament); constitutional life and the new Constitution (1923); political doctrines (socialism, liberalism and peasant ideology, in particular), and their contemporary manifestations, the various “trendy” currents of the “Western ideology” (Petri, 2018) (utilitarianism, nationalism, militantism, regionalism, intellectualism, among others); but also democracy, syndicalism, or feminist movements in the world. Militant discourse on reform had a dual aim: better connecting Romania to Europe, and integrating the different perspectives of its Romania’s regions in the service of a unique ideal – the *Românism* (*Romanianism*) (Rădulescu-Motru, 2008 [1936])²¹.

Rădulescu-Motru theorised this new “historical mission” of Romanians who would have to step forward from the “School of nationalism” to the “European School,” thus opening Romania to the “new horizon of European spiritualities” (*ibidem*, 21)²². He argued that *Românism* “is that spirituality which puts in

²⁰ Column “Weekly review: facts and reviews [...] from abroad”, *I.E.*, no. 5/20 (July 1919), 4. Boldface emphasis added.

²¹ This idea is further developed within the volume of C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Românismul. Catehismul unei noi spiritualități* [*Românism. The Catechism of a New Spirituality*], (Bucharest: Ed. Semne, 2008 [1936]), a reproduction in facsimile of the first published edition by the Foundation for Literature and Arts “King Carol II”, where the author stated that “We need *Românism*. [...] Thanks to the nationalism of the previous century, we have a place within the concert of the European sovereign nations; thanks to the *Românism*, we will have a mission within the European history. Because the historical mission is something different from the national sovereignty. [...] National sovereignty is just a simple stair towards the conquest of historical mission. We, the Romanians, we are half way. [...] we are the imitators of foreign countries [...] because we do not have yet the consciousness that the future of the Romanian nation is in the hands of the brightest of Romanians,” (12). Hence, he argues, “The XIXth century was the century of peoples’ legitimacy as national sovereignties; XXth century is the century of peoples’ selection in their struggle for the historical eternity” (14).

²² The new “policy” of the “European spirituality” is for the author the slogan “Accomplish what stays in your power and not what lies in your illusions” (26), as the main lesson learned by “the European” after the Great War.

agreement the demands of Romanian life and the new European spirituality” (*ibidem*, 22). It seemed that Romania was ready to stop imitating Europe as attested to by Rădulescu-Motru:

We are Romanians: let’s have the courage to find out who we are and to show ourselves to the world as we are. We didn’t have this courage until today. [...]. With a well intentioned purpose: we have thought that in this way we will *Europeanise* faster. We have thought we were obliged to be to the likes of Europe. Nevertheless, Europe, through its new spirituality, disengages us from this obligation. Europe asks us to be what we are; on our own roots; with our own destiny. (*ibidem*, 31)

Throughout the issues of *Ideea Europeană* (1928), the privileged core narratives are *European civilization*, *European family*, and *European spirit*; other new formulas in interwar discourse (*European culture* and *European idea*) focused on shared European background. Omnipresent in this “European” vocabulary are *peace* (in binary opposition to war and conflict and even an argument of those last), *the Federation of the European States* – developed between the 1900s and 1920s, the idea of *a single competitive European market*, and the *removal of borders between European states*.

Consistent with a legitimate finding by A.M. Mironov (2013, 39), it is difficult to assess whether the social impact of the pro-European movement in interwar Romania was one of scale or not, rather “of relative importance”. However, although decried for the small number of pages, the magazine *Ideea Europeană* enjoyed of “prestige” in intellectual circles, often invoked in the editorial signal notes present in the specialized press at regional and national level. The only information on circulation does not refer to *Ideea Europeană* magazine, but to the Supplement “Calendarul Poveștii” edited by *Ideea Europeană* magazine in January 1923, which was printed out in 1,500 copies, intended in full for the subscribers of the magazine *Ideea Europeană*. (see the Note, in *Transylvania Magazine*, year 54, no. 3/March 1923, column Bibliography, p. 62).

This was also the case with the scholar journal *Revue de Transylvanie*²³ (1934–1944), where one could observe the evolution of Romanian conception of the idea of Europe until the beginning of the Second World War. The “European” narratives were further elaborated, and parts of the European model that the country needed to be prepared to adopt included: “peace of Europe” (Sofronie, 1935, 137–143); “this new family of states” or “Europe of the law” (Sofronie, 1936, 273–277); “this new instrument of civilization” (Boitoș 1939, 27–42); “the European common thinking”; and the three fundamental “principles of the idea of Europe”, namely “nationalism”, “sovereignty”, and that “every nation and every state have the right to their own life.” The goal was to “[create] a European unity, a

²³ Published in French, first to Cluj-Napoca and then to Sibiu.

community of Europe as a whole, where the issue of the borders would lose its current importance”, and where “the European civilization is to become a unique entity”, and “Europe, organized as a whole” would follow the “direction of the European common affairs” (*ibidem*, 162).

These are just a few examples of how the idea of Europe was shaped in the Romanian “laboratories” of the era, in order for the “European unity” and the “European civilization” (Ciocâlțeu 1944, 156–166) to be publically acknowledged all across the country. Furthermore, G. Sofronie²⁴ frames the European issue in the strategic vision of King Carol II, by emphasising the pivotal role of Romania in the region. He thus evokes the “position and rights of Romania within this new family of states,” (Sofronie 1936, 273–275)²⁵ and “its new historical mission [...], the one of being the guardian of order, peace and civilisation in this part of Europe.” (*ibidem*, 277)²⁶

REBUILDING EUROPE AS A PROJECT: ROMANIAN VIEWS ON THE FEDERALIST APPROACH

The idea of a new federation of European states was quickly embraced by the Romanian elite of the era. National newspapers, scholar journals, and books emphasised its potential benefits for both Europe and Romania. For instance, sociologist Dimitrie Gusti²⁷ explained the federalist approach in detail:

²⁴ George Sofronie (1901-1961) studied Law and Letters at the universities of Iasi and Bucharest, and then, as a Rockefeller fellow, he completed his studies in International Law and International Relations in Paris and Geneva in the mid-1920s. He continued his academic career at the Universities of Oradea, Cluj and Sibiu, and at the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest.

²⁵ “Ainsi, à cote de ses actes et de ses contributions dans le domaine international, tous dans la même ligne politique définie depuis plus de quinze ans, tous traduisant son aspiration à une paix durable fondée sur le respect des traités, ainsi que l’ont voulu les constructeurs du nouvel ordre international et de cette “*Europe du droit*” selon l’expression de Georges Clemenceau, la Roumanie confirme par la bouche de Celui qui est le mieux à même de garantir l’orientation permanente de ses relations internationales, la constance de sa politique. [...]. C’est donc à bon droit qu’on a pu dire qu’après les déclarations récentes du Roi Charles, *la Roumanie apparaît plus que jamais comme “l’inébranlable pivot de la paix” en Europe centrale, le facteur capital du maintien et de la garantie dans cette partie du continent, du statut territorial et politique dont dépend dans une si large mesure la sauvegarde de la paix générale.*” (Sofronie 1936, 273–275). Emphasis in original.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 277.

²⁷ Dimitrie Gusti (1880-1955) was the most preeminent figure of Romanian sociology of his time and the founder of the Sociological School of Bucharest, the Romanian Social Institute, and the first Romanian scholar journals in sociology. He was also a well-known promoter of the federalist approach in Romania. He studied Letters at the University of Iasi, and then moved to Leipzig where he was awarded a doctoral degree in Philosophy (1904). He went on to study sociology and political economy at the University of Berlin. He became professor at the Universities of Iasi and Bucharest, member of the Romanian Academy from 1919, and its president from 1944 to 1946.

“*Federative*” is nothing else than the solemn expression of the conciliation of two antithetic principles that collide from the very beginning of human society, that is the principle of authority and the principle of freedom. Therefore, federalism brings us a new conception of freedom, and can be defined as follows: I give a little part of my freedom, to create an authority that guarantees the rest of my freedom. Federalism (from *foedus*, *foederi*, pact) is a political contract. In the system of contractors, those who join the association: family heads, communes, regions, states...receive as much as they sacrifice. (Gusti 1935 [1930], 255–257)²⁸

Starting from the geographical anguishing interrogations²⁹ of P. Valéry (2000 [1919]), D. Gusti formulated a new definition of Europe – “a society of European peoples” – so shattered, anarchic, and divided, that it doubted its own identity. Gusti’s thought on this issue was nothing less than a manifesto for the idea of Europe:

Europe is not a term corresponding to a geographic scientific notion. Geography denies the existence of a continent of Europe that appears as a triangular extension of Asia [...]. However, Europe is a human continent, a spiritual creation, a splendid manifestation of will and thought. *Europe does not mean a territory, but a social-spiritual idea*; it is the society of European peoples [...]. Europe is a rational and activist idea, culminating in scientific creations and their technical applications that dominate and absorb other human cultures. Today, with much insistence, we are talking about a crisis of European culture. [...]. Let’s not exaggerate! When there are European science and technology that are leading the destiny of all mankind, one cannot speak of a crisis of European culture. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of Europe is interesting from another point of view. Europe begins to doubt itself; its world hegemony so far is now being debated and questionable; it is for the first time that the other continents stand in front of Europe as rivals. (*ibidem*, 256)

In Gusti’s approach, the so called geographic argument is strongly refuted, and Europe itself is seen like the “laboratory of a new life,” where the federalist approach for Europe (the “United States of Europe”) is still to be built. As well, a common European will remains fundamental: “May Europe remain as charming and fascinating as it was; let’s oppose that Europe returns to Asia, because we

²⁸ Gusti, D., “Problema Federației Europene” [The Issue of the European Federation], *Arhiva pentru Știința și Reforma Socială*, IX, no. 1–2/21 (February 1930), 1–23, republished in D. Gusti, *Sociologia militans. Introducere în sociologia politică* [Sociologia militans. Introduction to Political Sociology] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Social Român, 1935), 255–275, quote appears on 263.

²⁹ “Or, l’heure actuelle comporte cette question capitale : l’Europe va-t-elle garder sa prééminence dans tous les genres? L’Europe deviendra-t-elle ce qu’elle est en réalité , c’est-à-dire : un petit cap du continent asiatique? Ou bien l’Europe restera-t-elle ce qu’elle paraît, c’est-à-dire : la partie précieuse de l’univers terrestre, la perle de la sphère, le cerveau d’un vaste corps?”. (Valéry 2000 [1919]).

cannot believe that Europe, of work, of power, of science, of technology, of accumulated experience, would not have so little reason as that to start a new life!" (*ibidem*, 275)

Moreover, a vision on the European project during the Second World War is surprisingly genuine in the pages of the last issue (1944) of *Revue de Transylvanie*. The paper "La Roumanie et le problème de l'unité européenne" authored by Mihail Ciocâlțeu, inventories the fundamental principles of the European construction, "constitutive for the European common thinking." An excerpt is particularly significant given the clear vision it offers on the future of Europe, during the last years of the war:

A la fin de cette guerre, on essayera certainement de créer une unité européenne, une communauté de l'Europe toute entière, dans laquelle la question des frontières, perdront de leur importance actuelle. [...]. Tous les Etats européens doivent être, en droits, égaux les uns aux autres. [...]. Chaque Etat doit être considéré comme pleinement souverain, mais, pour assurer la collaboration interétatique, chacun doit renoncer à une partie de sa souveraineté. [...]. Si l'Europe veut vivre et sauver sa civilisation, les gouvernements des divers pays qui la composent doivent faire l'impossible pour établir une collaboration sincère entre leurs pays, basée sur le respect du droit des autres à la vie et au libre développement. (Ciocâlțeu 1944, 161–162)

THE RISE AND THE EXILE OF EUROPEANNESS: DIPLOMATIC INSIGHTS

Three Romanian personalities remain emblematic (see Gafencu 2013) for the Romanian presence within the European club of the idea(s) of Europe during interwar period: Take Ionescu³⁰, Nicolae Titulescu,³¹ and Grigore Gafencu, all ministers of foreign affairs. Their common goal was to create the premises of European security to the East and to consequently secure the new Romanian borders. Of the three, Grigore Gafencu was the genuine Romanian Europeanist, and so his approach to the idea of Europe will be examined.

While for interwar Romania the reality of the "European crisis" remained an issue until late 1939, Gafencu engaged in a series of diplomatic visits across

³⁰ Take Ionescu (1858-1922) was active in Romanian politics before the Great Union in 1918, especially as the founder of the Conservative-Democratic Party, starting in 1907. In 1919, he became minister of Foreign Affairs, and in 1921 Prime Minister of Romania. From these positions of authority, he created the Little Entente, further consolidated by N. Titulescu and G. Gafencu, among others.

³¹ Among the political personalities of the time, Nicolae Titulescu (1882-1941) is the one who was called the "Minister of Europe". Delegate for Romania to the Peace Conference in Paris in 1920, he was subsequently appointed a representative of the League of Nations, and then, in the period between 1930 and 1932, he was twice elected president. Titulescu was three times Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1927 and 1936, after which he was relieved of all public duties because of his disagreements with King Carol II.

Europe during the summer of 1939. Some of his reflections were already published in 1939, and they proposed a clear vision³² regarding the expectations of South-Eastern European countries toward the idea of Europe. Nevertheless, the final version of his notes³³ was only published in France in 1946³⁴ and illustrated the state of alert of European representatives and diplomats just before the beginning of the Second World War. Gafencu's reflections were revealing for their dark vision of the "end of Europe", but they were also an occasion for exploring new dimensions of Romanian diplomatic conceptions of the idea of Europe, as shaped by reflection upon European actions, reactions, or inactions with respect to the European crisis. Gafencu noted the disappearance on a European scale of the "sense of legitimacy associated with collective security policy", as well as the need to create "a new legitimacy" for the "restoration of a general security system" (Gafencu 2011, 95). The conciliatory solution of isolation, originally adopted by the United Kingdom and France, had already shown that it would not produce the desired positive effects in Berlin. A "prudent" attitude, however binding on small states, could not exclude, in the opinion of Gafencu (shared by King Leopold III of Belgium as well), the search for other "means" of action for those states that could still form the "economic" group around the "peacekeeping" desideratum and "the feeling of European solidarity" (*ibidem*, 98). These two variables were essential in any attempt to restore the "European equilibrium", in the absence of which they were all helpless while confronted with a "period that was particularly suited to the crisis and could lead to war" (*idem*).

Faced with the imminence of the war, in August 1939, Gafencu's visit to Athens confirmed his fatal intuition: "The European crisis has brought our countries closer. The Greeks and the Romanians were aware of the events with the same rapid intuition" (*ibidem*, 200). Similarly, in Ankara, where, as in Bucharest, there were "very old economic relations with Germany which the Berlin government wanted to develop and which the Turkish government did not intend to hinder" (*ibidem*, 194). In addition, Turkey "(who appreciated better than others the decisive influence that Russia could have had on the evolution of the European crisis) was firmly convinced of Moscow's will to contribute to general peace" (*ibidem*, 195).

³² "J'ai senti l'unité et l'indivisibilité de l'idée européenne dans toutes les capitales où j'ai passé, où la même civilisation brillante se débat au bord du gouffre pour ne pas périr. Je me suis surtout rendu compte de cette unité européenne en écoutant les pensées et les inquiétudes des dirigeants avec lesquels j'ai eu l'honneur de m'entretenir." (Gafencu 1939, 585–586).

³³ Grigore Gafencu, *Derniers jours de l'Europe (Un voyage diplomatique en 1939)* (Paris: L.U.F., 1946), first translated into Romanian in 1992 – Grigore Gafencu, *Ultimele zile ale Europei. O călătorie diplomatică întreprinsă în 1939* (Bucharest: Ed. Militară).

³⁴ Before that, Gafencu published his "instant book" *Préliminaires de la Guerre à l'Est*, written during the war, and published in Paris in 1944. L. Constantiniu, *Preface to G. Gafencu, Préliminaires de la Guerre à l'Est. De l'Accord de Moscou (21 août 1939) aux Hostilités en Russie (22 juin 1941)*. (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2011), 19.

Then diplomatic anxiety turned into panic due to the imminence of the war, and thus the refuge, as seen by all, remained the “European peace idea”. European security was obviously not only compromised but completely destroyed, and the leaders of the small states were “struggling to save their peoples by improvised means” (*ibidem*, 101)³⁵. In this context, the Anglo-French guarantee seemed to provide safety and security, especially for the countries of Eastern Europe, as noted by Gafencu during his visit to London:

Meanwhile, the Balkan countries, which were not under immediate threat, have had accepted with gratitude the Franco-British guarantee. They saw in it a means of approaching the old allies who, in the last time, gave the impression that they wanted to disappear from the south-eastern European scene. The presence of England and France in a region where the Axis had the pretence to reign alone seemed to promise if not certain security, at least some freedom. (*ibidem*, 126)

Nevertheless, Hitler’s warnings regarding the French-German guarantee for Romania, addressed to Gafencu during his private visit to Germany in April 1939, were still shading the temporary comfort to the East supported by the Franco-British guarantee: “The Anglo-French guarantees – the Chancellor has said – will not serve you at anything. But I will not formalize. I know your *weakness* for France”. (*ibidem*, 78). Mussolini’s opinion (shared with Gafencu during his diplomatic visit of late May/early June 1939 to Rome), was essentially that “the Eastern states still did not understand”, explaining rhetorically: “What is the meaning of the Anglo-French guarantees? How will England and France be able to honour their commitments?” (*ibidem*, 169). And, indeed, the guarantees could not be sufficient for the new Eastern states; military and especially economic support was urgently needed “so that each country could maintain constant relations with the free market” (*ibidem*, 126), while all the Romanian diplomatic initiatives in this regard were directed toward London and Paris. Nevertheless, given the highly fragmented internal situation of France, Gafencu affirmed the priority of liberating France from “any fascist diplomatic intrigues”, which could allow it to regain “influence to the East; and its influence was beneficial, for it was the only one which has made little light in this dark Europe” (*ibidem*, 161). The desideratum to restore the “European equilibrium” – that is, the French spiritual influence to the East and, in terms of security, England’s presence in the region – illustrates the European engine of the era:

When leaving my French hosts, I once again expressed the sense of anxiety that dominates my country about the spiritual ties between France

³⁵ So that “Ankara seemed to be at the centre of the efforts made in the world to fight the way of the war”. (*Ibidem*, 101).

and the nations of the East. We were afraid of the distance of France not only in the political field; the presence of France in Eastern Europe has maintained in that region a security element in the spiritual realm; and especially in this area the weakening of France's influence could cause the most serious consequences. Many medium or small countries were linked through French thinking of the European order, protecting their patrimony, their moral rights and property. *Seen from outside, England was defending the continental equilibrium. France gave its content to the European idea.* The new influences that were born tended to overturn not only the balance of forces, but to undermine the foundations of a civilization. Replacing real values with the commandments of a doctrine based on violence, seemed to induce confusion among nations and individuals. In this way, they first struck France by shaking its positions of great power. France was weakening as Europe was emptied of substance. Confusedly, I thought that any threat that threatens France threatens us too. (*ibidem*, 161)³⁶

The deepest expression of “anxiety” is therefore reserved for France, divided, lost, but “determined to withstand” (*ibidem*, 140). The anxiety of France appears in Gafencu's notes as an extreme mirror of the restlessness of the other European states, where it was reserved only for diplomatic chancelleries:

The long and difficult European crisis that led to the Munich agreement shook its strong moral position. A new feeling was revealed to France, the one of loneliness. The unjust fate that has hit its generous people had caused serious divides within the French community. The divide was amplified by social crises, and a certain tiredness of the regime was felt. [...]. Under these circumstances, the French leaders aligned themselves with the opinion expressed by almost all Europe, that is extreme solutions should be avoided (*idem*).

In France, the local crisis took the form of a “dangerous confusion for the national structure” (*ibidem*, 142), which slowly encircled the whole of Europe through the mirage of authoritarianism – “the main advantage in Hitler's hands”. “The word ‘authority’ had gained ground, and the prestige of democracy was shrinking. In Warsaw, in Bucharest, in Budapest, in the Balkans, the new ideas not only provoked insurrectional movements but strongly influenced the state politics.” (*idem*).

While all those emergent Europeans were expecting decisive responses from London and Paris, Gafencu's visits to their Chancelleries gave him the painful revelation of the situation, a diplomatic state of “revolt” that further delayed the expected concrete actions:

³⁶ Emphasis added.

“*France* seemed to have lost the meaning of Europe. France leaned back to those who preached the resignation ... When the government [...] followed the major lines of a policy whose foundations had already been seriously shaken, France seemed absent.” (*ibidem*, 144)³⁷

“If, in the case of Britain, the break-up of the balance in Europe was yet only a threat to its global positions, France was a reversal of its continental positions. And we, French leaders and representatives of the Eastern countries, felt that we were stretching our hand over the ruins of our common security organization [the League of Nations]” (*ibidem*, 145).

The conclusions of Gafencu’s search for European destiny during the summer of 1939 were voiced by Pope Pius XII:

“Europe was as he saw it with a keen lucidity: Europe had created destruction forces that no human being could have mastered. Pius XII looked even deeper and his gaze was covered by an indescribable sadness; in a world where the war was being prepared, the spiritual forces would be inoperative. As in the most troubled times of history, an untrammelled wall has already separating the field of reason from that of action.” (*ibidem*, 178)

Certainly, Gafencu’s worst fears were realized in what he saw as the end of Europe: “Old Europe would end up with the swastika flag on the Acropolis” (*ibidem*, 202), just there where “this temple expressed, in its perfect proportions, the idea of unity of Europe, the heiress of the brightest civilization that ever existed, and gave, with its great and yet painful ruins, a solemn warning to all who would want, once again, to destroy the common heritage” (*ibidem*, 200). The lucidity of President Metaxas of Greece during his meeting with Gafencu in August 1939 led inevitably to the same tragic conclusion: “Here. Europe has begun in here – he said with a simple pride. Here it may end if we do not remain in a permanent state of alert” (*ibidem*, 201).

In 1944, while explaining the “last Romanian efforts for saving the Eastern equilibrium” (Gafencu 1944, 246–258) that he expended in 1939, both in relation to Romania’s Balkan allies and to its Western models, Gafencu stated that “Romania remained determined in its will to preserve its national independence and its loyal policy to the European order of law”, “as long as it still existed somewhere a Europe to stay attached to” (*ibidem*, 253).

Gafencu published his writings while exiled, as the “Europeanness” of Romania remained henceforth the exclusive preoccupation of its exiled thinkers until the end of 1989. Gafencu continued his editorial and “diplomatic” activity first in Paris, then in Geneva, and he remained closely connected to the new European project and its founders. In June 1948, he urged all Romanians living in

³⁷ Emphasis added.

western exile to abide by the newly created Romanian Grouping for United Europe³⁸ – his diplomatic response to the resolution of the Hague Congress (7-11 May 1948). In this document, he stated his will to reunite “all Romanians who can freely express their faith in the European idea” and “who can support, in accordance to Hague Congress’ Resolution, the Romanian cause within the European cause”.³⁹ Nevertheless, the interwar Romanian conceptions of the idea of Europe, as well all those Romanian engagements after the Second World War to further the building of the European consciousness, were kept “top secret” in this exiled laboratory. They were finally brought back intact to Romania after the fall of the iron curtain, during the 1990s and more so in the 2000s, as a rebuke of the eras of communism and post-communism.

CONCLUSIONS

By the end of the 1920s, a “European” vocabulary had been internalised by the new Romanian society. It was built around the “European idea” – a new formula explaining for the people of Romania an intellectual horizon for the future. The new project for Romania’s future was thus fully dependent on Europe, which was seen as an ideal type of civilisation and spirituality, and as a tangible reality willing to embrace borderline cultures. While the European vocabulary became more and more popular, discursive evidences of Romanian otherness were revealed mostly in relation to the desire for modernisation and the imperious need for deep reforms. The (European) civilisation, culture, spirituality, community, society, and family were already omnipresent when the federalist approach was introduced and debated in Romania. Furthermore, the new Romanian project was naturally integrated into the new project for Europe. In this context, the place and role of Romania was seen as central within this European project. To support this vision, the Romanian argument was built on the strategic position of the country at the Eastern border of Europe, and its role within the Little Entente.

In the late 1930s, the (European) peace, solidarity, community, security and equilibrium were dominant discursive narratives. Meanwhile, Europe had become a state of mind in Romania and optimistically shaped its journalistic and academic discourses. The dark but clear views of Europe were the realm of the diplomats. Oscillating in between Europe itself as a “socio-spiritual idea” and “the end of Europe”, public and diplomatic Romanian discourses of the era witnessed the building of another unitary national identity. Europe was officially acknowledged as the only option for Romania’s survival, the main road to modernisation, and the

³⁸ See the text in *Provocarea Europei. Exilul elvetian al lui Grigore Gafencu 1941–1957* [The Challenge of Europe. The Swiss Exile of Grigore Gafencu] (Bucharest: Pro Historia, 2004), 445–446.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 446.

only hope for the future. In this context, Romania's otherness was culturally integrated and "lived as a destiny" (Baudrillard and Guillaume 1994, 169), highlighted by this social sense of inferiority⁴⁰ with regard to "Homo Europaeus" and his western civilisation.

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⁴⁰ A popular feeling toward Western Europe as expressed at its Eastern border was also documented by Tzvetan Todorov: "J'ai grandi dans un petit pays, situé à l'une des extrémités de l'Europe, la Bulgarie. Les Bulgares ont, à l'égard des étrangers, un **complexe d'infériorité** : ils pensent que tout ce qui vient de l'étranger est meilleur que ce qu'ils trouvent chez eux. Il est vrai que toutes les parties du monde extérieur ne se valent pas et que le meilleur étranger est incarné par les pays d'Europe occidentale; à cet étranger-là, les Bulgares donnent un nom paradoxal, mais qu'explique leur situation géographique : il est « **européen** », tout court." (T. Todorov 1986, 8). Boldface emphasis added.

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