R S P

The Crisis of Culture in the Post-Communism Transition

Maria Pescaru[*]

Abstract:
After 1989, there was a reform in the Romanian society that caused significant tension both at the political level and in the economic and cultural system. The characteristic transformations for the cultural phenomenon are: the aspiration for the restoration of authentic values and the regaining of the creation freedom. Changes in cultural space are closely related to those in the political space. Within the cultural environment, in the transition period, the communist regime and cultural reconstruction projects prevail.
There have been critical interpretations of the culture of the communist period: accusations and culpability on some representatives of Romanian culture; descriptions of the malfunctioning of cultural institutions. There have been debates on the meaning of cultural resistance term during the totalitarian regime. Concerning some assertions about diffuse collaboration and support for the communist regime, there were different invitations to represent a form of passive resistances by cultural personalities, manifested by refusal to write under control.
Among the culture people, a climate of suspicion and accusation prevailed and it generated by the idea of a communist process. In the Romanian culture, during the transition, there were confrontations, problems which remained diffuse, un-clarified or analyzed and reinterpreted. In some publications, significant topics related to establishing the truth and reconstructing the correct image of the past were analyzed. The relationship between national identity and European integration has been widely debated in cultural and intellectual environments.

Keywords: *cultural phenomenon, reform, reconstruction, cultural institutions, transition*

[*] Associate professor PH.D., University of Pitești, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Social Sciences and Psychology; Phone: 040745157786; Email: mariapescaru@yahoo.com

The theoretical framework of the problem

Any change that profoundly changes the course of civilization, in particular, any change that intervenes in the economic support, is accompanied by a reversal and a decline in the cultural values. But, driven by the inertia of the old cultural patterns, the traditional types of reaction manage to maintain themselves. This lack of adaptation of traditional responses to the new conditions is accompanied by a certain anxiety which the most conscious individuals may feel as a fundamental failure of culture. Certain anti-communist circles insisted, in the first years after the 1989 Revolution, for a "communist process" as an ideology, considering it a totalitarian and inhuman system. This process was for some vigilantes a broad spectrum that concerned the compromises made by some writers and cultured people with the communist regime. Thus, there were tendencies of critical review of the works of some writers who were considered to have a positive attitude towards the communist regime. If strictly political criteria of review were used, the value of the works would have risked moving to the second level.

Going through a long process of clarification and redefinition, the Romanian culture has undergone some actions to recover the values under the communist regime's prohibition or carried out by the ideological criteria of this regime. Thus, at a gradual pace, the cultural values board has been revised and a new internal structure has been granted. This reconstitution of cultural values began with the massive restitution and the apology of the right-wing culture of the interwar period, some culture people wondering if we "change the left-wing culture to the right? It seems so in some clues." (Mariano, 1995: 144).

The republication of some authors' works from the interwar period was considered to have contradictory effects as for the right culture, the dominant values were: the refusal of political pluralism and parliamentary democracy, the mesianism, the rejection of relationalism and the fundamentalist spirit, the eulogy of the nationalist, traditionalist, xenophobic accents, etc. In the opinion of some intellectuals, "These authors are anything but they haven't been and can't be great teachers of democracy, pluralism and liberalism. In this respect, they can not constitute our democratic, central cultural landmarks." (Mariano, 1995: 145)

The authentic democracy was considered to be based on the center culture that has its own merits: the priority given to the freedom and dignity of the individual (not the collectivity), the liberal, democratic, pluralist, rationalist, individualist and European conception.

Political determinations of the culture crisis

During the transition, there was a review of the significance of historical moments and events as a result of the deformations produced by the communist ideology over national history. Important documents that were previously inaccessible to events or personalities of political and cultural life were made known.

Many valuable authors could not publish their works during the communist regime, the reader audience had no access to their creations. Other authors have been interpreted in a defamatory manner, and others without scope have been oversized in meaning.

Considering all these aspects, the values of the Romanian culture had to be reconsidered, reconsidering the contribution of some personalities, according to the new

data, to the development of the scientific, artistic and philosophical life in the contemporary age.

In the view of some authors, the meanings of these statements expand, and "it is often enough to claim that any act of culture, under the old regime, constituted an act of resistance" (Mariano, 1996: 29). Sometimes this formula is also a shelter for "those who have benefited from the graces of the regime, and for those who have suffered because of it" (Mungiu, 1995: 64).

There were the intellectuals' tendencies to be in possession of certificates of litigants or dissidents, being accused of the practice of intellectual disinterest and lack of interest in serious social problems. Some of them considered this practice as an "invented phrase to designate the natural, not polarized, activities of the cultural elite, but many crypto-laborers have served to excuse their cowardice during the communist regime". (Mungiu, 1995: 64)

Cultural institutions depoliticizing has led to the opposite effect, so: "At the beginning of 1990, students demanded that the university should surrender the truth, not make politics" (Simion, 1996: 134)

Some academics said the following: "I draw attention to the fact that we are witnessing a new mystification in culture... the tendency is that the Stalinist era be removed from the discussion, although the prisoners were full of intellectuals." (Simion, 1992: 138)" (Simion, 1992: 138).

Some intellectuals have advocated such a process: " It must have been clear, from the outset, that we do not need reprisals, but the punishment, according to the law, of those who committed crimes." (Paler, 1993: 165).

In underdeveloped societies, modernization cannot take place without producing a social culture. A distinction must be made between economic growth (technological accumulation, efficiency, etc.) and social development (a concept that engages all the structures of a society). Modern development involves a new inner culture, a change of the inner values, of the mental foundations on which a cultural pattern, the value system, the means of expression, etc. emerge. Because culture is structurally and functionally involved in a society, an appropriate cultural paradigm is needed.

An analysis of the Romanian culture can generate controversy and confrontation of ideas in intellectual, political, media and specialized publications. The cultural fields of science, literature, art, philosophy, or political thought must be analyzed with the responsibility of presenting reality to the past.

Young people must have a system of orientation and interpretation of the Romanian spirit that is as concrete as possible at this moment and in which there are these divergent points about the Romanian culture's personalities, about Romania's reporting on Europe, about the Romanian cultural identity and the integration our country in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

In each society, culture at the same time corresponds to a particular way of living, thinking, acting, of an original form of civilization in a given society, in a group or in an individual, and of a dialectical movement between material transformations and voluntary changes have also been made. In this movement, the group or the individual brings its active and constructive part into the daily practice in transforming the society and its civilization. Without a value-creating culture, the civilization, fixed in rigid and nonrenewable structures, is doomed to death.

National Identity and European Integration Process

It is necessary to form an adequate, lucid, critical image of the national identity by reporting the works and personalities from the Romanian culture to the domestic socio-historical context and to the European cultural context.

There were concerns about the recovery of the phrase of *national idea*, compromised by the communist regime and its interpretation in its rational meaning.

Intellectuals are of the view that integration into European structures would contribute to the alleviation of national identities in favor of a European identity. Others argue that national values should be less concerned, as it would be important to assimilate institutional standards and European standards. The interest for national culture is interpreted as a nationalist and anti-occidental position.

There have also been interpretations of intellectuals about the national idea, conducted unilaterally, distorted, based on excessive assertions. Depending on the attitudes expressed in the published works on the national idea and the different representations on European integration, the cultural environment has been divided. There have been tendencies of culpability of the national sentiment and the national idea, on the part of the exponents of the European Union, the frenzied supporters of integration, with the slogan of entering Europe.

They felt that the national feeling and the national idea had been compromised by the communist regime and no longer had a major significance in the world of interdependencies and regional and world integration. Thus, they criticized the intellectuals rationally and critically attached to the national idea, seduced by patriot and xenophobic rhetoric. They considered them anti-reformists, conservatives, crypto-communists, exponents of national-communism, statements made in the media.

These phenomena have opened up the opposition between the intellectual, democratic, cosmopolitan, pro-Western elite and intellectuals attached to national ideals, to the specific background of culture. The same phenomenon happened in all Eastern countries. Integration debates have updated a central issue in modern Romanian culture, that of the tensions between universality and national identity, between the metropolis and the periphery in European evolution, between national realities and new geopolitical contexts.

Regarding the issue of reintegration, there have been debates on overcoming disability for so many decades of isolation. Comparative analyzes in this sense have led to rediscovering the historical gap with developed Western societies, rediscovering our "historical and peripheries" (Cucos, 2000: 38). There was a sense of frustration and inferiority complex by the precarious economic state due to the failures of the reform and other anomalies of the post-communist transition. There have been nationalist self-clustering reactions, even if political and cultural groups have this attitude. This relapse in a fatalistic mentality was determined by the critical urge and the perception of our identity in negative terms. Integration has been an opportunity to thoroughly examine Romanian culture from the point of view of its identity, using radical terms and finding answers to the new challenges of history.

The issue of entry into Europe was followed by political commitments, which led to disjunctive interpretation, considering European integration compatible with the national idea and the promotion of national values. The recovery of national identity, after the totalitarian regime, has sometimes been erroneously interpreted as an anti-European

attitude. The distortion of the idea of national identity and the recovery of its authentic sense were incriminated from the new perspective of democratic reconstruction and synchronization with the European institutions and with the requirements of integration.

Opinions have emerged that consider accession to the European Union as an emphasis on national values, but also opinions that reject integration precisely because it would mean the abandonment of national traditions and specificities. This disjunctive paradigm has been taken over from classical rationalism and sociologically resized by the ideologies of globalization. In this sense, most people understood that integration would involve forgetting national traditions and values, forgetting the flagrant injustice that the Romanian people suffered after the Second World War.

This anti-human vision has led to the misunderstanding that a traditional and critical conscience of national identity is not an obstacle, but a condition of European integration. The disputes between intellectuals who appreciate integration as being only possible by diminishing or forgetting our identity were reopened, with legislative, institutional harmonization and the remodeling of the economic system according to the requirements of the European Union, and those who thought Romania's integration could be the result of values specific cultures that legitimate existence and identity.

Such debates and exposures existed in the press at that time. Between 1995 and 1996, Gabriel Andreescu, an exponent of the Social Dialogue and 22 Dialogue Group, Alexandru Paleologu and Octavian Paler, expressed their well-individualized positions on the issue of Romania's integration into the European Union (Paler, 1996: 12).

The last two great intellectuals, opponents of moderate or decent nationalism, said that there are no Europeans out of nowhere, European quality does not invalidate national affiliation. European integration was opposed to the national idea, in some simplistic representations, as though this integration process required the renunciation of national affiliations so as to become "the Europeans of nowhere-procedure abusively and insidiously used by the term nationalism to respond to an allergy more difficult to recognize, namely national, national identity, national state, etc." (Paler, 1996: 7).

During the transition period, certain extreme positions have found expression in the beneficial effects of globalization, underestimating national values and adopting narrow and anti-Western nationalist attitudes.

The considerations of some intellectuals about these extreme positions were that " The interest in the consolidation of our European path does not seem to be a concern to clear the national trajectory." (Ulici, 1996: 75). The author clarifies the terms of the debate by delimiting the plans. Thus, ideologically there are disjunctions between Europeanism and nationalism as unilateral positions, and on the anthropological and historical plane, it speaks of the European and national complementary.

The displacement of ideological discussions in the historical and anthropological plan leads to the alleviation of the tensions and impose a new vision on the integration process which does not exclude the two national and European terms. Thus, integration into institutional Europe and the assertion of national identity have become connective. At present, Romania belongs structurally to Europe's civilization space, its defining values and its entire evolution towards modernity. The national feeling is solidarity with the feeling of natural belonging to this space. The recovery of national identity, its reinterpretation, integration and support were consistent with the vision that the positive evolution of Romania in the coming decades is related to the process of integration into European structures.

Destinations that saw the European Union as a construction that would lead to the dissolution of nations and identities were destroyed. Monetary unification, the coordination of economic programs, common foreign policies and the existence of community political institutions have not led to the diminishing of national identities. Thus, the countries that are part of the European Union have not lost their identity but have redefined it in a new context.

There are also attitudes to supporting the construction of the European Union, preserving cultural identities as a wealth of the continent, in a climate of tolerance, collaboration and multiple cultural interferences. Balanced and rational attitudes would be the preservation and cultivation of identities, their defense against the invasion of the consumer culture emerging as a result of globalization and leading to the deconstruction of nations.

The relationship between culture and civilization can be addressed by considering culture as a system of values and civilization as the system of goods in which these values are found and expressed. Culture is the spiritual component, and civilization is the material component of a society. These can be analyzed in the process of cultural integration and differentiation, cultural globalization and cultural identity of societies.

Having in their core a system of beliefs, attitudes, values, differentiated options, "cultures always appear in the plural; they establish identities (individual or of group, ethnic or national)." (Maliţa, 1998: 55) Civilization has a universal vocation, it contains technical means by which the societies ensure their material preservation and historical development.

Until extensive and rigorous politologycal and historiographical studies, the "European idea" needed affirmation and dissemination, clarification and consolidation, solidarity and deepening in as many Romanian receptive knowledge as possible. It was necessary to discuss methodologically the "European idea" in its triple dimension: cultural-literary, ideological and political, as reflected in the current Romanian culture and realities.

Three intellectual attitudes can be expected: a permanent connection to European values, ideas and culture; the most serious European documentation (libraries, university studies, museums, etc.); cultural achievements at European level (as writing and value), in the Romanian environment, by Romanian culture people. "Bringing Europe home", by our own Romanian-European creations means to raise ourselves to the standards and conditions of European reception and circulation, so our own Romanian creations will become "European values" as well.

The true Romanian creator has never had complexities of inferiority or superiority, and if we create solid, durable, fundamentally we will have what we offer and effective presence to Europe. This European cultural integration, doubled by the assumption of the spiritual identity of the Romanian people, began to intensify.

Looking deep, beyond the external factors, the key to the European integration problem is Romania. Also, the psychological factors of blockage, rejection or "docile" alienation and lacking of personality are very important. We cannot overlook any irritating attitudes of the Western "complex of superiority".

After the fall of communism, in Romania there is an explosion which sometimes that cannot be controlled, of differences, different and contradictory speeches. Minorities manifest themselves by demanding their rights.

The Crisis of Culture in the Post-Communism Transition

Transition and the crisis of culture

The democratic climate after 1989 led to a radical change in the political condition of culture, but at the same time, culture is facing economic hardship. With the occasion of the Cultural Forum in 1997, various views on the cultural evolution of the post-communist era were expressed. One of these points of view was that there is no "crisis of culture" in terms of creation, but a crisis in the administration of culture.

"What we have lived so far is a poor management of the cultural gesture. We are not in a crisis of culture. It's an assertion that was misused if we take into account editorial appearances, international tournaments ..." (Caramitru, 1977: 11).

There were also points of view that "Seven years in Romania the indifference of politicians has perfected what has ruined ideology (the former regime) ... I think there is a crisis of culture and not only in us but in the world" (Paler, 1997: 111).

An approach to culture should be done not only on the administrative, accounting, but also on the spiritual trends and orientations, the cultural responses and the challenges of that time.

In the view of some intellectuals, culture should be regarded as a fundamental element of national identity, in the analysis with the historical phase in which we are also in the process of globalization and integration: "A country can lose its identity in two ways: disintegrating territorially and disintegrating spiritually. At the level of the political class, there is only talk about the economy (...) ." (Paler, 1997: 3).

Insisting on the significance of culture in the identity of a people, the same author (Paler, 1997: 3) appreciated the defense of culture as just as important as defending the national territory. Political and economic systems are evolving towards integration, while the phenomena of interference and cultural lending are multiplied. Culture cannot escape the flow of value-for-money, as instruments of cultural disintegration, to deprive societies of a fundamental factor of social integration.

Within the culture there are changes in values, transformations of social mentalities and practical behaviors. One cannot neglect: the phenomenon of the expansion of consumer culture during this transition period, the shift of cultural preferences towards poor quality products, industrial entertainment offered on a mass scale; diversification of commercial televisions. They were interested in audience, mediated media consumers with soap operas, violent films etc.

Some intellectuals consider the phenomenon of the crisis of culture as the most serious disease of the transition, saying: "After 1989, freedom quickly turned into chaos. (...) A subculture without frontiers - that is what the transitional period offers us. The difference between culture and subculture makes it a critical spirit" (Manolescu, 1999: 11).

The Romanian experience in industrialization, social mobility and, in particular, emigration offers a fertile field of analysis. Especially in terms of the resilience capacity of the spiritual symbols that circumscribe cultural values in the face of aggressive penetration and pressure of some systems of foreign norms and cultural values. The structural features of Romanian culture: historicity, natural vision, communion with the cosmic laws, the deep sense of ethics etc., have begun to be seriously threatened by an unsatisfied vital need: the uncertainty of tomorrow.

A similar situation, albeit more dramatic, is found in the Romanian emigrant's psychology. Receiving in the family a dual, conflictual education, the deduction of their

behavior is supported in social life by dual cultural norms and values: the values of the Romanian culture are not deserved because they are falsified by the demagogy of our public life, while only the values of Western democracy a genuine framework for fulfilling his personality. So, the future Romanian emigrant socializes in this internal cultural conflict, but on a false basis.

The cultural picture of an era is given by the achievements from the scientific plane, the artistic movements, the evolution of the literary styles, the giving of the right place of the Romanian thinking in the education system.

The issues we should be concerned about are: How does the young generation relate to the culture of national culture? To what extent are traditions known to them? Is the present Romanian society preoccupied with shaping another destiny, integrated in European structures, still interested in the cultural past?

In contemporary society, as a result of globalization, cultural identities are not canceled, but must be redefined in a world that has become global, polycentric. Cultural identities can be strengthened through profound creation and competitive participation by asserting them in universal space.

Cultures are products of companies, groups, express values, ideas, behavior patterns. These are assimilated by social groups and found in institutions, attitudes, behaviors and social relationships. Social agents are trained and shaped by cultural elements, values, languages, knowledge and practical patterns.

During this period, social communication of values and communication between cultures through the media system intensified in Romanian society. Thus, there are cultural interferences, connections and exchanges of cultural values. There is a clear link between unity and diversity. Globalization does not destroy the interest of cultures for their spiritual identity, but national cultures are considered to be integrated into the vast circuit of intercultural communication.

The Romanian transition society is characterized by a mixture of styles, abandoning the great political and artistic ideologies, the disappearance of the border between culture and elite and the popular one, the expansion of consumer culture and the entertainment industries. The Romanian cultural creation has a polycentric character, it presents a diversity of forms and creation centers.

During the transition period, we are witnessing a wake-up to reality and a change in the value points that determine the phenomenon of identity confusion, of hardly accepting our own limits and deficiencies in the process of approaching the one that is different. Getting used to what is homogeneous in communist times has led to hardly accepting something that is more or less than ourselves. Many individuals are guilty of their attitude of open support to the old communist regime.

After 1989, the groups are sometimes indiscriminately multiplied, which proves lack of maturity or even naivety. Unbounded freedom has generated a multitude of divisions: political parties constituted by unjustified criteria; cultural groups that promote the same rights but do not recognize each other. These issues lead to overcapacity and overcrowding, creating a chaotic and multicultural society, the intercultural dimension failing.

According to some authors (Bîrzea, 1994, pp. 17-19), the transition from a totalitarian society to a democratic society led to a state of crisis, anomie, caused by the annihilation of the state and the communist party, of the repressive apparatus of the disappearance of the paternalism of the almighty state, the paradoxical coexistence of the

new structures with the old ones, the social structural remnants and the capitalist forms of social regulation.

Conclusions

The sum of values of a particular culture allows the grouping of value orientations, which serves to appreciate the actions and the formation of cultural activities through institutions and statutes, allows the creation of a general order of rules by which members of the same culture and community tend towards the same values, a common life and maintains their cultural community.

Cultural norms are over-individual and over-grouping and, as such, as any cultural element, can stretch in space and time. Cultural rules are transmitted or learned through culture. By learning the rules of their own culture, people regard them as normal, and abnormal strangers, unnatural. Each community has its rules, as well as rules and institutions for the transmission and learning of rules, as well as institutions and rules for the maintenance of cultural rules. Failure to rules in a community calls into question the existence of the community, the life inside it.

The cultural work is a work of brotherhood. To the extent that value remains immanent to consciousness, they remain strange to others, even though they share the same value, even if each value develops in them in the same ways. Through cultural action people establish a simultaneous essential and permanent connection. Truth is never a truth if it is a truth for me alone; the beautiful is never beautiful if it is beautiful only for me. "The value is not only for the individual, it belongs to the community. Hence, people's desire to persuade their peers to participate in their axiological universe**".** (Smith, 1995: 198)

Culture is an appeal to all people to overcome the constraints of space and time in search of unity, and also an appeal to overcome individual, universal and essential differences. It was necessary for the inevitable transfer of sovereignty to the European institutions at the level of certain decisions to be analyzed realistically and pragmatically, in order not to leave the place of insinuation of reservations and fears about a possible dissolution of the Romanian national identity as a result of Romania's integration into the European Union.

Contemporary age is characterized by social progress due to the cultural environment that builds specific institutions with gradual relative independence. Culture in today's social contexts imposes specific criteria of homologation of values through the multitude of forms of expression, professionalizes, becomes a specific area of competence and creation.

The Romanian culture, developing in particular social and historical conditions, must also relate to the stages of Western cultures. Intellectuals are sometimes subject to circumstances requiring them to carry out routine activities, take on political, administrative, educational, journalistic or diplomatic tasks. Their creative activity is thus interrupted, fragmented, lacking the necessary continuity in the work of research and spiritual construction.

The Romanian creators were confronted with the problem of the delay of the development of the Romanian society and with the tasks related to the accelerated modernization. A culture needs good conditions to develop original thinking systems or artistic works.

In our age, the cultural dimension of development has become increasingly apparent. Development is a cultural, not only economic and technological process.

Western societies have been propelled into the avant-garde of contemporary civilization and the density of cultural (especially scientific) creation.

In underdeveloped societies, modernization cannot take place without producing a social culture. A distinction must be made between economic growth (technological accumulation, efficiency, etc.) and social development (a concept that engages all the structures of a society). Modern development involves a new inner culture, a change of the inner values, of the mental foundations on which a cultural pattern, the value system, the means of expression, etc. emerge. Because culture is structurally and functionally involved in a society, an appropriate cultural paradigm is needed.

The type of culture influences the development of a society, helps it or delays it. The quality of the education system is of great importance for any society engaged in development, ensuring the transmission of accumulated experience, scientific heritage, practical and civic behavioral patterns. Non-economic indicators of social development regarding education, access to information and knowledge highlight the fact that social development is dependent on the use of information, the transition to a "supra-symbolic economy" (Toffler, 1994, p. 70) where the use of knowledge and communication counts mostly. Romanian society faces these challenges due to the fundamental changes in the current civilization.

References

Bârzea, C., (1994). *Les politique educatives dans les pazs en tradition*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press.

Caramitru, I., (1997). *Intervention at the Cultural Status Forum*, in Plus, supplement of *Magazine 22*, no. 45

Cucoş, C., (2000). *Education. Cultural dimensions and interculturality*, Iaşi: Polirom

Maliţa, M., (1998). *Ten thousand of culture, a single civilization*, Bucharest: Nemira

Manolescu, N., (1999). The worst disease of the transition, *România literară,* no. 36

Mariano, Ad. (1995). *For Europe, Integration of Romania. Ideological and cultural aspects*, Bucharest: Polirom .

Mungiu, A., (1995). *Romanians after 89. The history of a misunderstanding,* Bucharest: Humanitas.

Paler, O., (1993). *The big danger is now to do what we once again did for fear, interview,* in Stănescu, C., 1996, *Interviews in Transition,* Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation

Paler, O., (1996). *Letter of reply to Mr. Silviu Lupescu, at his request to accept that the polemic articles of the author regarding the positions of Mr. Gabriel Andreescu (on nationalism) to be published in the same book,* in Andreescu, Gabriel, 1996, *Nationalists, anti-nationalists ... A problem in Romanian journalism,* Iaşi: Polirom

Paler, O., (1997). Intervention at the Culture Forum, in Plus, supplement of *Magazine 22*, no. 45, part III.

Simion, E., (1992). interview: We opted for incitement to tolerance, in Stănescu, C., 1996, *Interviews in Transition*, Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation.

Smith, A., (1995). *National and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Ulici, L., (1996). *National and European.* In Andreescu, G., *Nationalists, anti-nationalists... A problem in Romanian journalism,* Iaşi: Polirom.

Toffler, A, (1994). *Powershift*, Bucharest: Header.

The Crisis of Culture in the Post-Communism Transition