

UNITY IN DIVERSITY AND DIVERSITY IN UNITY

**ROMANIA BETWEEN THE WESTERN EUROPEAN
AND ORTHODOX VALUES AND NORMS**

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To start with, let us acknowledge the divide between the Greek-Orthodox East and the Roman-Catholic/ Protestant West. Emerging anew after revolution with tragic results for Romanians, this divide is still ignored by the post-communist elite. Agriculture and the rural subsistence culture are dominant in the East, whereas in the West advanced industrial technologies and urban culture are prevalent. Wages, productivity, political participation, professional mobility, social differentiation are modest in the East, yet in the West they register high levels. Social organizing is simple and informal in the East, but sophisticated in the West. Direct and personal in the East, social control is indirect and institutionalized in the West. In the Orient, Christendom is of the state whereas secularism prevails in the western world. The West has universal values, while the East has peculiar ones. Outcome of a thousand year schism, of a separate evolution for Orthodoxy versus Catholicism, this dichotomy of values generates different societies: a deadlock?

I

In the Byzantine tradition of defining colors for political parties the 2004 elections were disputed between the “blue pravoslavniks” and the “orange pro-westerners”. After the orange pro-west victory what are going to be Romania’s obligations in the East and the West? President Traian Basescu’s visit in Kishinev (Chisinau), at his people in the neighboring Moldovan republic politically subordinated to Kremlin and religiously subject of the Russia patriarch Alexei the 2nd, was promising. Nevertheless the touchstone, the main test for the new regime, remains a visit to the Pope at the Vatican.

II

As a matter of policy the Western patriarch, pope John Paul the 2nd, accepts the visits of all Eastern chiefs of state and patriarchs at the Holy See. This should be the starting point of the new Romanian president's agenda and that of patriarch Teoctist's for promoting relations with the West. The Vatican has always had an unprecedented opening for the Romanians despite past boycotts of the kind imposed by orthodox communists like Ceausescu and the neo-communist Ion Iliescu. Behind an Iron Curtain guarded by the Red Army, Ceausescu was somehow politically and physically shackled in the Soviet camp, the Warsaw pact and the Council for mutual economic assistance (CAER). Former president Iliescu had been for his turn a faithful catalyst trained by Moscow, even under Stalin, to defend the Romanians against the "ill-fated" influence of the capitalistic West by using the Marxist-Leninist doctrine in its secularized form, the pravoslavnik spirit and orthodoxy.

III

Ceausescu visited the Vatican and made great promises to the West. His actions facilitated Romania's relative development and well-being in the 1970's. Later, when Mikhail S. Gorbachev instituted perestroika and glasnost, his policy of openness and reforms, Ceausescu showed his true colors and was executed. Ion Iliescu and His Beatitude patriarch Teoctist have made numerous visits to the Holy See and in the West. Both of them have praised the 1989 revolution and subsequently Romania's re-aligning from the East to the West. Their efforts have not been deemed either credible or good enough to match the significance of the Holy Father John Paul the 2nd visit to Bucharest. As a result the Romanians were again marginalized.

IV

The democratic president Traian Basescu must overtake his orthodox (neo)communist predecessors. Together with the parliament, the Romanian orthodox church and other decisional factors president Basescu has the will and legitimacy to extricate his compatriots from their age-old misery and isolation by pursuing an open and sincere dialog with the Vatican and implicitly with the West. This is the real foundation and sole guarantee for a lasting integration of Romania and Moldova in Europe. At the same time such a dialog will confer Romanians living in Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece or working by the millions in the West a real chance for their emancipation.

V

The Moldovan and Wallachian rulers from Stephen the Great or Michael the Brave to today's leaders have been positively or negatively entangled, volens nolens, with the "second and third Rome", that is the Ottoman and Russian empires. They also pursued ties with both the Holy Roman Empire and the Holy See. Due to their religious, political, historic and geo-strategic background as "pravoslavnik" Latins, the Moldo-Wallachians are inclined and somehow pre-ordained to a certain degree of cunningness that can pass for duplicity in the West. In their unabated fight for survival, juggling with one foot in the East and the other in the West, they get caught red-handed in the end and have to pay for it. Some end up tragically, executed like the Ceausescus, Ion Antonescu or Michael the Brave. Others lose their power such as the Iliescu-Nastase tandem, the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty or Alexandru Ion Cuza who died in exile.

VI

Following the great invasion of Slavs in the seventh century in Europe, and the Grecization of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Romanians--Roman descendants--had lost connection with Rome geographically and spiritually, being definitively pushed down politically and religiously by the Greco-Slav alliance against the Roman component. Since then, Romanians had it coming from both directions; whenever they tilted to the West more than the Sultan and the Russian czar wanted,--both unconditionally supported by the Greco-Slav Orthodox (Pravoslavs)--they got punished once, and endured the drastic vengeance of Westerners next time, when they betrayed the latter. In this East-West conflict of interests, the Turks, equally the Russians, were interested in cooperating with the West, allowing the Romanians--as a rule, at the order of their masters--a degree of maneuvering employed to extract themselves from the tutelage of Constantinople and Moscow, and come to the West.

VII

Ever since, Rome has been helping the Romanians fallen in servitude to their natural foes, the Greeks and the Slavs. Beginning with the occupation of Constantinople in 1204, subsequently at the Council of Florence in 1439, with the Uniting of Transylvanians in 1700, the creation of the Moldo-Valachian principality in 1859, the Old Romanian Kingdom in 1881, the Greater Romania in 1920, then at the Revolution of 1989, and the visit of Pope John Paul the Second in Bucharest in 1999, the Westerners kept offering their helping hand to Romanians, decaying in the Greco-Slav Orthodoxy's Babylonian type captivity. But the

Moldo-Valachians always failed, either through deficiencies of their own efforts, or because they were boycotted, or simply did not understand (with the exception of Cuza and Kogalniceanu), that their Latin origin wasn't sufficient in itself, requiring more than that, that is, retying the old spiritual connection to Rome, to the starting point of their civilization, which cannot be racially or geographically defined (as is the case with Anglo-Saxons, Hungarians, and Iberians, Italians respectively), but only culturally--as of Roman origin.

VIII

Moldo-Valachians are presently afraid of the West either because they do not know the EU -"Acquis", because they can't distinguish between the Western European and Orthodox values and norms, or cannot accept the Continent's East-West incompatibility. Just the fact that Romanians are geographically in Europe is not satisfactory to EU. Not long ago, in the Muscovite "Camp", the unbridgeable gap existing between the Orthodox-Communism and the Imperialist West had been institutionalized. Therefore, the idea, according to which two societies would require a harmonization of their divergent norms, must not be as surprising as it appears, neither the fact that EU was founded on the Roman-Catholic, not on the Greco-Byzantine code, or that eluding by cultural palliatives these differences in religious foundations could be counterproductive.

IX

Religion providing the foundation and key for deciphering political, socio-economic behavior, the idea of Romania's joining the EU without a dialog with Rome, and without the reunification of Christianity, one way or another, could be only a pious lie. By turning into a taboo the aspects of religious-political interdependence, the Orthodox-(post) Communists will not erase overnight the barriers of communication originating in religion, and against which colonialists, capitalists, imperialists, globalists, and the technocrats --"the God-less" adherents to Europe,--have been fighting for centuries. Nonetheless, without harmonizing oriental and western values, European political and socio-economic integration will remain but a façade, in the style of the Russian Prince Potemkin.

X

The two Romanian states, will either reorient their views, reorganize their ways, and join, according to EU legislative norms, or will remain at Europe's periphery, where the old adage, "divide et impera", will continue to be on the daily agenda. If they refuse, or do not understand the importance of dialoguing with Rome, Romania will share the fate of

Bessarabia, and will dismember. Banat and Transylvania will tend to regionalize, growing apart from Bucharest, not unlike The Baltic countries became separated from Moscow, or Slovenia and Croatia from Belgrade. The remaking of Europe's Christian, then political unity has been attempted for better than a millennium. Presently the EU "Acquis" is in the process of being implemented, based on a modernized version of the Romano-Catholic canonic code. Hope is that this will automatically lead to a alignment with the Orthodox tradition. Similar EU institutions, legislation, began their introduction to the Moldo-Valachian population a decade ago, in the belief, that following the failure of "empty forms", form will now generate the substance. But since the dialogue with Rome had been delayed for such a long time--dialogue being a sine qua non condition of joining EU--in the case of the poorest Latin people of Europe the results are still modest.

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