

A Different Kind of Publishing, in Time of War
– Review* –

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One of the editorial endeavours that professor Zoltán Rostás undertook in 2013 was the collection entitled *Răfuiala cu scopurile noastre. Școala sociologică de la București în cotidianul Ecoul 1943–1944* (*A Quarrel with Our Own Purposes. The Sociological School from Bucharest in the daily The Echo 1943–1944*), published at Paideia Publishing House.

The 203-page collection contains fifty-three articles that three members of Dimitrie Gusti's School published in a newspaper entitled *Ecoul* (*The Echo*) between the 19th of December 1943 and the 30th of June 1944. *The Echo* was founded by Mircea Grigorescu, in December 1943. The publisher reinforced the articles with footnotes, with *a chronology* of the main events that occurred during the analyzed war interval (the chronology was intended to interpret historical, political and social terms, in which these texts were produced) and with *a foreword*, in which Zoltán Rostás defined the present book as being:

A «snapshot» of Gusti's School journalism, a spontaneous picture of an intellectual group, of a transitional situation, an invitation to reflect on some individual and group attitudes without the interference of posterity. (p. 11)

Moreover, this *Foreword* reveals that the volume opens “a series of collections of articles belonging to Gusti's followers, occurring in one or more publications”, aiming at “a deeper understanding of this Sociological School, which, obviously, implies knowing the networks, their social ties, including those with the press of the time.” (p. 8)

To whom do these journalistic exercises in time of war belong? *Răfuiala cu scopurile noastre* contains: twenty-one articles signed by Octavian Neamțu, sixteen

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articles signed by Ion Conea, eleven articles signed by Henri H. Stahl and a number of five unsigned articles.

In order to fully understand the contents of these journalistic exercises and their "power of the moment" – to use Mr. Zoltán Rostás's phrase (p. 9) – the reader could promptly recognize the stage reached by the Sociological School in Bucharest, from an organizational point of view, but also from the point of view of a theoretical-methodological conception, institutional structuring, publications, or national and international visibility, especially if the reader refers to the last two publications of analysis concerning Gusti's School, namely number 3 (175)/May-June 2013 of *Sfera politicii* (*The Sphere of Politics*) review, coordinated by Zoltán Rostás, and number 1/2014 of *Transilvania* (*Transylvania*) review, coordinated by Sanda Golopenția.

At the same time, in order to make this "power of the moment" transparent, it would be useful if the reader knew the professional stage reached by the three monographers – Neamțu, Conea, Stahl – when they published in *Ecoul* and the stand they took as individuals or as members of a group within the press of the time. As a matter of fact, the monographers' involvement in the press of the time would need a deeper examination, especially since some of the milestones of this matter have already been outlined. For example, Sanda Golopenția published some fragments from the epistolary dialogue between Anton Golopenția and Octavian Neamțu. They appeared in *Transilvania* no. 11–12/2012, and they took into account the stakes of some magazines designed by young sociologists. Also, Zoltán Rostás discussed the monographers' individual collaboration stage regarding the newspapers and the magazines of the time, in the editorial at the number quoted in *Sfera politicii* magazine in the 1920s, followed by the stage of a monographic press. The outbreak of war in 1939 found Octavian Neamțu and Henri H. Stahl in the role of tutors of Royal student teams, by assiduously publishing in *Curierul echipelor studențești* (*The Courier of Student Teams*) (1934–1939). In 1939, it became *Curierul Serviciului Social* (*The Courier of Social Service*), so Neamțu and Stahl's presence within the pages of *The Echo* is not surprising.

However, let us go back to the content of the articles in *The Echo*. The five unsigned articles are mere reports of the sittings in academia (at the inauguration of "The Association of Students in Sociology and Ethics") or academic (at professors Simionescu and Bogdan's deaths, at the commemoration of Ludovic Mrazek). From my point of view, they are interesting because they talk about Gusti who became the President of the Romanian Academy on the 10th of January 1944, "in a complex combination of roles that, over time, looked like *ciuleandra* [a very rhythmical dance]; he accepted it and, most of the times, he managed to dominate it" (Sanda Golopenția, "Școala sociologică de la București între apogeu și suprimare" ["The Sociological School from Bucharest between Apogee and Suppression"] in *Transilvania*, 1/2014, p. 2)

The first voice of a monographer within the pages of *The Echo* belonged to Octavian Neamțu. His twenty-one signed articles seem to continue the mission of an organizer, of an ideologist and of a propagandist of cultural actions in villages, a mission that was undertaken by the Royal student teams. With an optimistic persuasive tone, Neamțu advises the readers to channel their energies towards thinking a social development, which will be needed when "the dreamed peace" will come (*Fuga de răspundere*, [The Runaway from Responsibility], p. 92–95). This peace must not find the nation fatigued by rumours (*Cinci zile în Basarabia*, [Five Days in Bessarabia], p.

88–92) or by *Teama de reforme* [Fear of Reforms], p. 42–45) that this kind of a future will bring. This fear is a “disease of modern society” (p. 42). The state of war cannot be ignored, but neither converted into an argument for “fleeing from responsibility” towards “the work necessary for the nation”; on the contrary, “life within the nation should increase in intensity, so that, at the end of the war, the nation could stand ready to fight the new one, the fight that is carried out with weapons of the spirit, with weapons of culture” (p. 93). This cultural action, Octavian Neamțu says, is threatened by “the risk of errors of conception” (*La comemorarea lui Spiru Haret. Pentru cultura popoarelor* [At the Commemoration of Spiru Haret. For the Culture of the Nations], p. 18); by the risk of dispersal of efforts between so many organizations of “Romanian research and action”, or between educational youth organizations, whose “active presence (...) in his village life is a must” (*Pentru tineretul țării* [For the Country's Youth], p. 143). Neamțu pleads that, at the peril of “scattering of creative energies and of materials (...), a damaging weakness of method” (p. 125), the solution is the one envisaged by Gusti, namely the federalization of institutions, the design of policies for youth education, in close liaison with those for educating the nation.

Ion Conea, who enters the monographic research from Anthropogeography and Geopolitics, solely voices, in two of his articles, forecasts of war in the Polish-Russian dispute (*Lumină și șanse în diferendul polono-rus*, [Light and Opportunities in the Polish-Russian Dispute], p. 72-76), and actions in the Suez Canal („*Acțiuni*” la Suez, [“Actions” at Suez], p. 169-172). The remaining fourteen articles are either discretely glossed on the basis of new or old editorial appearances (signed by Camille Jullian, Georges Rigassi, Ioan Lupaș, August Scriban), or represent daily events in the academic life, more or less happy (e.g. the death of Prof. Sabri, a working visit at the academics from Cluj-Napoca that were in refuge in Sibiu, removing the human and political geography in school syllabuses etc.). They all build a high-stakes identity-nationalist speech. The arguments for the unity of the Romanians, including those remaining outside the territorial borders, as they appeared in 1944, are taken from Human Geography, Geopolitics, History, Toponymy, Etymology.

In my opinion, the most interesting voice in the publication entitled *The Echo* remains, however, the voice of Henri H. Stahl. Although it is “heard” less, as it is represented in only nine articles, Stahl's voice is revealing for the following question: *What is sociology good for?/ What is sociology good for in wartime?* A theorist, a field worker, a monographer (let us not forget that, in 1934, he published *Tehnica monografiei sociologice* [The Technique of Sociological Monograph] and in 1938 he coordinated the monograph of *Nerej* etc.) – Stahl brings sociology into the social, putting his theoretical and methodological purchases in the service of the social. More specifically, all his analyses in *The Echo* are dedicated to a must-see Romanian reality: the peasantry. With the exception of the first and the last, the other seven published articles are default pleadings because the qualitative research of the social can reveal the paradoxes of Romanian peasantry and it can suggest social mechanisms of a process of modernization. According to the author, this process should be based precisely on the most archaic and the most traditional social practices within society, for example: *obștile agricole*/the agrarian collectivities (*Sărbători involuntare* [Involuntary Holidays], p. 82-86; *Tractor* [Tractor], p. 113–117), “the commands” in Transylvanian villages (*La “porunci” în sate ardeleni* [“Commandments” in Transylvanian Villages], p. 165-169).

The article *Răfuiala cu scopurile noastre* suggests that Stahl's publishing has created a debate: "since last week till today I have asked and I have been asked for several times what agricultural collectivities were" (p. 96). As the other two monographers from *The Echo*, Stahl expresses his confidence in a bright future for the people, noting that "this nation's power is nothing but his deep rural humanity, one of an ancient culture and forever fresh nobility" (*Icoana patriei* [The Icon of the Nation], p. 176).

In addition to the themes and the individual style of each of the three authors, there are, in my opinion, at least three dimensions that unite them in the pages of *The Echo*, beyond the status of a monographer and the professional networks within which they used to collaborate.

The first dimension is the pleading for social action based on the knowledge of social reality. I quote the words of Octavian Neamțu that sound similar to Stahl's: "in order to introduce a reform, it is not enough that someone wants it, but it is necessary that it is received by the people and met by national realities" (*Teama de reforme* [Fear of Reforms], p. 44).

Secondly, as a natural consequence of the first dimension, it's worth mentioning the support for field researches given by those who, in the turbulent years of 1943 and 1944, no longer went out on the field in organized campaigns, but lived with their lessons and nostalgia. See Conea's recipe to avoid daily cares, given in the article *Pe Argeș în sus* [Upstream the Argeș River] (p. 64–69), as well as Neamțu's conviction that "nothing could be more rewarding than researching the world of the villages, so little known by the towns" (*Haideți, fraților, să mergem* [Come on Brothers, Let's Go], p. 24). Stahl's lesson on how to view/explore a problem in the field – what, when, how to ask (*Răfuiala cu scopurile noastre*, p. 95–99) or the downright postmodern suggestions on how to text/publish/make another to see, especially when a stranger, also "ready-made images" about Romania ("La răscrucea împărățiilor moarte", ["At the Crossroads of the Dead Kingdoms"], p. 56–60).

Thirdly, what unites Ion Conea, Octavian Neamțu and Henri H. Stahl in the pages of *The Echo* is what we might call *Gusti "lineage"*. What and how much of the content, the style and the rhetoric of Dimitrie Gusti's texts and creeds are present in their articles? Where does the "quarrel" with the teacher begin, if it begins? The reader will have the pleasure to respond to these problems, but also to ask other interesting research questions, while reading the collection put together by Zoltán Rostás, *Răfuiala cu scopurile noastre* [A Quarrel with Our Own Purposes].