

une expression comme “capitalisme médiévale”¹⁶ leur aurait produit de gros problèmes axiologiques, relèvent de leur forte dépendance du système marxiste des “ordres” et auxquels on a relégué la “(ré)écriture” du passé.

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Beyond Logos¹

I am looking at the door of an old iron “locker” dating from a pitiful regime and at a glued sheet of paper bearing for a while a quote from Vasile Alecsandri. I open a book published this year – *Arhivele românești între tradiție și reformă* [*The Romanian Archives between Tradition and Reform*] by Diana Joița and Ioan Lăcătușu – and I see on its first page the same quote from Vasile Alecsandri: “The Archive of a State is a public heritage worth to be granted the greatest care by the government. Its represents the assemblage of all public records, administrative, legal, and political serving for grounds to the legislative and to the history of the country.” Hence, we may opine that the quote from Vasile Alecsandri lingers perpetually between tradition and reform (have we not heard these words elsewhere, or were they “revolution and reform”?).

Published shortly after the 175th celebration of the National Archives, the style of this book does not transcend the aforementioned Romantic style of Alecsandri. It is a mixture of observations on how the archives used to be, should have been, and even would be, as well as a “report” of the activity carried out by the two authors – Ioan Lăcătușu, “the old wave” and Diana Joița, “the new wave”, as outlined by themselves from the very first lines.

From the beginning of the first chapter entitled *Provocări și priorități actuale pentru Arhivele Naționale* (*Current Challenges and Priorities for the National Archives*), the two authors engage in a rather pathetic pleading on the subordination of the National Archives to the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform as opposed to the discussions on the conveyance of the Archives to the Ministry of Culture, one of the reasons cited being the protection and safeguard of the records, which could have become vulnerable in a different context. The two authors come to contradict themselves since in another sub-chapter they express their discontent towards the lack of storage spaces at the central and local level, fact that could jeopardize the safety and protection of records. At the same time they complain about the reduced capability of documents restoration and preservation, the low capacity of serviceable equipment supply, the lack of financial resources, the vacancies blockage, etc., but they never show discontent towards the inefficient management of the National Archives post-1989. Moreover, they appeal to

¹⁶ Cf., par exemple, Henri Pirenne, *Les phases sociales dans le développement de capitalisme médiéval*, “Revue Belge d’Histoire et de Philologie”, 2 (1914); M. Postan, *Studies in Bibliography. I. Mediaeval Capitalism*, “The Economic History Review”, 4, 2, 1933, p. 212-227.

¹ Review of Diana Joița, Ioan Lăcătușu, *Arhivele românești între tradiție și reformă* [*The Romanian Archives between Tradition and Reform*], Sfântu Gheorghe, Editura Eurcarpatica, 2007, 276 pages.

tradition, although the Archives have been continually subordinated to the Ministry of Interior since 1951, which is to say since the Communist regime. Annex 3 presents *Situația privind apartenența instituției Arhivelor în diverse țări ale lumii* [*The Status of Archives services appartenance in different countries world-wide*]; from 21 examples given (we are not aware why only that many) in just 4 cases the Archives services are subordinated to the Ministry of Interior: Argentina, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and Slovakia.

We also notice that those who share different opinions – legislative, managerial, or service quality related – with regard to the National Archives are criticized. In chapter 1, II.2. – *Substratul unor proiecte legislative alternative* [*The Substratum of Certain Alternative Bills*] – the authors refer to the propositions addressed by DUHR (Democrat Union of the Hungarians of Romania) concerning the set up of a public records service, decentralization, free access to archives with the exception of the damaged, etc. Furthermore, the authors argue that the idea of hiring staff in relation and proportion with the languages the records were written in implies the introduction of the ethnic criterion. We signal that a person who possesses a good command of an old or little-known language does not suggest the appartenance to an ethnic group or other, given that the Archives lack the staff speaking rare languages. Thus, we consider it dull to bring into this discussion the ethnic criterion, and although nowadays the otherness feeling is maintained and sharpened under the form of nationalistic frustrations, these should have not been expressed in a paper on the National Archives.

It is to appreciate that the two authors share their experiences and impressions after participating in international events – see the sub-chapter *Lucrările Congresului Internațional al Arhivelor desfășurat la Viena, 23-28 august 2004* [*The International Congress on Archives Held in Vienna, August 23rd-28th, 2004*] by Diana Joița. We question what specifically was implemented in Romania from the experiences of other archives services, or whether major discrepancies were registered between the Romanian and the foreign archives, particularly in the field of IT and digitization, cooperation with IT companies, access facilities, etc., without fearing constantly that the archives would be less safeguarded if access to records were made through other means than traditional, or whether the number of IT experts grew annually instead of decreasing, not to mention that in fact they are missing.

The sub-chapter referring to *Activitatea de arhivă de la creatorii și deținătorii de documente...* [*Archival Activities Performed by the Records Creators and Keepers...*] accounts of the “vast expertise of the National Archives in the guidance, control and professional assistance given to archives creators and keepers” (p. 127), reviewing the rather serious problems occurred at archives creators and keepers. Hence our questions: What did the National Archives do in this matter if they had such a wide expertise? How specialized is the staff in this field? And the questions could continue. We appreciate the use of questionnaires by Covasna County Branch of the National Archives addressed to archivists and to archives creators and keepers; however those questionnaires lack essential questions such as: How satisfied are the mid-educated staffs by the quality of the training courses, and equally by the quality of controls performed at organisations creating and keeping records? Beyond all difficulties related to the rules and regulations in force, lack of financial resources and staffs, little importance was given to the guidance

and control of organisations creating or keeping archives and concrete examples should have demonstrated this.

We leave aside the sub-chapter presenting *Federația Arhiviștilor din România* [*The Federation of Romanian Archivists*] and move on to chapter II written by Diana Joița and dealing with *Arhivele Naționale și imaginea lor publică* [*The National Archives and Its Public Image*]. We stress that the author displayed a subjective view all along, being directly involved in the public relations activity of this organisation. In addition, from the very beginning this chapter is deprived of any public opinions, namely the opinions of the users of archives – either citizens claiming rights based on records or researchers, or any other people coming into contact with the archives. Could we speak of an organisation's image as long as we have no public view on this matter, be it positive or negative? A management strategy cannot be accomplished this way. If we excessively theorise or present the embellished side of things ignoring criticisms, we only come to minimise the PR activity within an organisation.

After a sub-chapter dedicated to definitions and general considerations on the public relations, Diana Joița refers to the PR activity of the National Archives warning that we might become surprised of the variety of laws, directives, instructions and circular letters which underpin this activity, and she counts them in the end. Nevertheless, our organisation chart holds only two vacancies for the PR department – one for high-level education staff and one for mid-level education staff.

The author further presents the *Strategia de Informare și Relații Publice în Arhivele Naționale* [*Information and PR Strategy of the National Archives*], which is not inwardly-oriented, based on the public's views and requests, but outwardly-oriented, although the intentions and objectives seemed to be praiseworthy, as shown in *Planul integrat de promovare a imaginii Arhivelor Naționale ale României* [*The Integrated Plan for the Image Promotion of the National Archives*] for 2005-2006, annexed by the author.

As for the mass-media relation, beyond any statistic data – number of information notes, press releases, positive articles, etc. – the authors refers to the press campaign carried out by *Jurnalul Național* and called *Operațiunea ceață și fum. Ce s-a întâmplat cu Arhivele Partidului Comunist Român și ale Securității* [*The Fog and Smoke Operation. What happened to the Archives of the Romanian Communist Party and the Securitate?*], which tackled the issue related to the access to RCP archives, without mentioning any concrete steps taken for the opening of these archives, but specifying that many deliberate confusions have been made. At the same time, Diana Joița mentions how she had sent many press releases “informing of the archivists' concerns for the improvement of our activities, which are in fact thoroughly citizen-oriented”. This is, however, a means to divert the public attention from core problems.

Other sub-chapter deals with *Săptămâna Arhivelor 2005* [*The Archives' Week – 2005*], presenting in the same exaggerated festive manner the events organized during that week. The festive feature implies an overtly positive façade image, although the Archives may be celebrated differently: opening a new building, opening new fonds requested by researchers, increasing the number of public relations staff, preparing repositories for the transfer of archives, etc. Had all these been revealed to the press and public, then the Archives would have gained a positive image, and the degree of involvement at a societal level would have become visible, serving the community.

Reviewing in a few pages the Reading Room of the National Archives under the pathetic title *Poartă deschisă spre istorie* [*A Gate Opened to History*], Diana Joița presents it in the same Romantic note, inviting us to a museum visit: “Once you enter the Reading Room, you do have the feeling of crossing a temporal threshold...” Indeed, once you entered that room with old and dusty furnishings, lacking any equipment and many times cold beaten, you had the feeling of living in the 19th century, away from the civilised world. Despite all that, the Reading Room custodians, interviewed by the author, complain here and there of the work conditions, but recount that our organisation is member of the International Council on Archives and that the staff members are sent annually to training courses or professional gatherings abroad. In addition, great contemporary historians are cited to have studied in this Room: Dan Berindei, Gh. Buzatu, Florin Constantiniu. Why only these people? Again, we have no opinions from other researchers, and this makes the author’s approach futile and inconsistent.

The ending of this paper is rather triumphant: *Arhivele Naționale – identitate în diversitate* [*The National Archives – Identity in Diversity*]. It relates to the international relations policy of this organisation, participating in various international events in the name of the European integration perpetual propaganda, but neglecting the pitiable state of the Romanian Archives.

We are not aware whether the authors of this book received an order to write it or whether it was of their own accord. Regardless of the situation, the untold truths and the embellishment of the Archives’ image as perceived by the Romanian society at that moment, the lack of any harsh and realistic criticisms transform the approach of the two authors into a writing-style exercise for the 175th celebration of the National Archives.

Mirela-Daniela Tîrnă

Review or Polemics? A Doubtful Beginning for Each...

The review by Mirela Tîrnă wished to open a polemics column in *Revista Arhivelor* (*Archives Review*). We have been long waiting for such a column which needed to unfetter judgements. The real debate initiated a year ago by a few “brave people” through the Romanian Archivists Federation forum had to find eventually an official setting within the publication edited by our organisation.

Since the column is only incipient, this should perhaps excuse the publishing of such notes springing from the mind of a frustrated archivist. **Not that the authors of this book would not be pleased by an initiative that seems to have been revived from “clinic death” since the popularisation of their ideas in the reviewed volume.** For those who have not thumbed the book yet, it must be first specified that the materials utilised were papers presented within reunions, scientific sessions, or meetings. Enjoying appreciation, they were also edited in publications issued by the National Archives, the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform, the Faculty of Archival Sciences, and further on gathered within a single volume. We question why these materials were not