

ION ȘPAC, *Revista „Arhivele Basarabiei” (1929-1938). Studiu documentar-informativ*, Kichinev, Bons Offices, 2006, 256 p.

C'est une excellente initiative de la Bibliothèque Municipale « B. P. Hasdeu » de Chișinău de publier cette étude documentaire sur la prestigieuse revue « Les archives de la Bessarabie » parue dans l'actuelle capitale de la République de Moldavie pendant l'entre-deux-guerres (1929-1938), sous la direction de T. Gh. Bulat et N.C.Tomescu, lorsque le territoire d'entre le Prut et le Dniester se trouvait sous la souveraineté de la Roumanie.

L'auteur, Ion Șpac, bien connu pour ses préoccupations dans ce domaine fait de nouveau la preuve de son érudition et de l'acribie tant nécessaire dans ce genre de travaux. Même si les éditeurs de cette revue ont voulu faire une publication « régionale d'orientation patriotique », comme nous sommes informés dans « *L'Argument* » (p. 4), les études, les documents et les nouvelles concernant l'histoire du Sud-Est européen et ses liaisons avec l'espace de l'Europe centrale et orientale sont toujours présentes dans les pages de la revue.

On insiste sur les problèmes de droit, ceux de l'église de la Bessarabie, sur les questions sociales, la science, la culture, l'enseignement et surtout l'édition des documents inédits, travaux dus, parmi les autres, à L.T. Boga, Toma G. Bulat, Em. Gane, Paul Mihailovici et Ioan Pelivan. On accorde une attention particulière à l'histoire de la géographie de la province et aux personnalités éminentes du pays et de l'étranger.

Extrêmement précieux pour les chercheurs sont les index (pp. 190-255) – noms, matières, ethno-géographique, princes de la Moldavie, chronologique, associations, fondations, institutions, départements, services etc., sources informatives, cryptonimes, titres et iconographie. Par exemple, dans l'index ethno-géographique (noms des pays, des peuples, des localités, des cours d'eaux, des lacs, des vallées etc.) (pp. 217-235) nous trouvons des repères comme Aroumain, Bazargic, Belgrade, Bestepe, Byzance, Bulgare, Bulgarie, Carlovitz, Constantinople, Danube, Phanare, Grèce, Jérusalem, Jugoslavie, Macédoine, Mer Noire, Nicopole, Turquie etc.

Il s'agit d'un livre d'une valeur particulière et les passionnés de l'histoire du Sud-Est européen trouveront toujours des détails intéressants qui pourraient compléter leurs informations ou ouvrir de nouvelles voies à la recherche.

Constantin Iordan

ERIC TAPPE, *Letters from Bucharest / Scrisori din București, 1944-1946*, Limes, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, 212 p.

This will be, probably, the last book to have on its cover the name of the late Professor of Romanian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies. At his death in 1992, this journal published an obituary (XXI, 1-2, 1993), for he had been a devoted friend of our Institute, which he visited at different times, and his work has made widely known the history and the literature of Romania. His researches had begun to take shape after 1948, when he had returned from Bucharest, where he had been a member of the British Military Mission. The letters he had written to his parents while he was here have been preserved, and a nephew of his, Mr Brian Davis, has published them with a translation into Romanian (by Ms Petronia Petrar). The young officer was likely to proceed with mixed feelings through the capital of a country occupied then by the Red Army. As he already knew the language, he was able to talk with Romanians (most of them were, anyway, fluent in French and English) and he benefited from their friendly hospitality.

His perceptions of the city and of the people he met are extremely interesting, because he was able to describe, in unsophisticated terms, a situation of special historical interest. When he arrived, in October 1944, the Communist party, having one of their leaders in the government, exercised a great authority over the country, but Romania was still a kingdom, the political class, more or less intact,

ardently hoped in the support of the Western Allies, the army was fighting the Germans and the Hungarians for the liberation of Transylvania, and the intelligentsia expected to see soon a democratic transformation of the Romanian society. The sympathy Tappe felt for those who welcomed him is quite understandable; it satisfies the reader depressed by Olivia Manning's malicious *Balkan Trilogy*.

For the young man who came in from the austere conditions of wartime England, the country he discovered was a Land of Cocagne. The letters insist on the subject of terrific meals: „Romanians like to eat a lot and take their time over it, so the meals drag on. Never have I overeaten so consistently...The helpings are so enormous”. Devouring with obvious relish „the Roquefort and the luscious meringues with cream”, he does not forget to write about „lots of tsuica and vodka...later brandy, champagne, etc.” Eric Tappe, who was surprised to find that the years of war had not impaired the conditions of life in Bucharest, noticed also that the bookshops were well supplied: „there are an enormous number of newspapers” and „books are remarkably cheap”. He wrote to his parents: „You would be appalled to see how my Rumanian library is growing, partly by gifts”. His friends were taking him to opera or theater performances. For instance, „The Twelfth Night”, with Dina Coccea as Olivia: “It was simply lovely. Beautiful décor; excellent acting, very vital. I think the best performance I've ever seen”.

Some of the peculiarities he noticed in the local mores are worth quoting: “When a man meets a woman or leaves her, he kisses her hand...Wine is often drunk with soda water as though it were whisky”. Then, again, he complains of the “lunch parties starting about 1.30 and lasting till 3.30”. He might have understood, however, that this was the Oriental form of sociability, the real pleasure being not the eating, but the conversation at table.

His walkings about the city allowed him to see the parks, Cișmigiu and Herăstrău. In April, magnolias and forsythia were blossoming, „the trees were mostly bare, but there was blackthorn in full bloom”, a few days later he mentions dandelions, which flower big and bold all over the place”. When autumn came, the tints of the foliage were in full glory: „wild pear trees go a most lovely red”. At Snagov, a grove of hornbeams left him a delightful souvenir. A tour of some old Bucharest churches offered the British guest the opportunity to make the acquaintance of Maria Golescu, the art historian who had to become a lifelong friend. The architect Ștefan Balș, who was already active in the restoration of historical monuments, guided an excursion to Curtea de Argeș. Ion Nestor and Dinu V. Rosetti invited Tappe to inspect their archaeological excavations at Glina, Gumelnița and Monteoru, prehistoric sites among the most important of Romania. It is fascinating to recognize the names on the list of people whom Tappe visited out of Bucharest, usually at their country houses: the Golescus at Budești, the Racotă at Storobâneasa, the Stolojan at Herești, etc. Among the historians he knew were General Radu Rosetti, M. Berza, Victor Papacostea, T. Sauciu-Săveanu, Radu Vulpe, and the Slavist D. P. Bogdan. „A very remarkable old lady” is Mrs Elisa Brătianu. Once he saw Princess Bibesco (Elisabeth, née Asquith). Colonel Barbu Slătineanu, an expert in old pottery, showed him his art collections. „Mrs. Nestor's brother, a painter”, was Gheorghe Labin. Tappe, who had been educated as a classical philologist, even went to the History Institute to attend Nestor's lecture on prehistory: “It was really very much like such gatherings in England, just the same types!” The Academy Library, too, looked familiar: “It is very much like a miniature Bodleian or British Museum reading room, except that it's modern”.

Because of the censorship, the letters commented very seldom on current politics.

Only one event moved Eric Tappe so strongly that he could not refrain from voicing his impressions: it was, in 1945, the culmination of Communist agitation on November 8, when the crowd assembled in front of the royal palace for the King's birthday was attacked and dispersed on government's orders. We have thus the evidence of a witness: “The victims of the firing were all sorts of people, including schoolboys and students”. In January 1946, at the arrival of Vyshinski, Harriman and Clark-Kerr, Captain Tappe was at the railway station and he remarked: “It looked like a Nazi welcome, flags and flood-lighting”. A few days later, he left Bucharest.

These views on a Romania of another age by an unbiased observer are refreshing and instructive. When one, like the present reviewer, had the privilege of meeting the author and being acquainted with lots of the people mentioned in the letters, it is like revisiting one's own past.

Andrei Pippidi