

## **PETRE FRANGOPOL – A FIGHTER IN THE PUBLIC ARENA**

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I met Professor Frangopol through his articles published in the first part of the 2000s in the Aldine supplement of the newspaper România Libera. Subsequently, we collaborated in various committees and, lately, in organizing symposia on education and research. I had the pleasure to collaborate with Professor Frangopol on the editing of a volume entitled “Romanian education and research. The present state and perspectives” which brings together the works presented in a workshop of the same name organized by the University of Bucharest in 2017.

One of his most well-known public activities is the publication of a series of volumes entitled “Mediocrity and Excellence: a radiography of science and education in Romania.” Like clockwork (every three years), from 2002 to 2019 (7 volumes), Professor Petre Frangopol compiled the articles he published in newspapers and specialized journals on the situation in Romanian education and research.

Usually, scientists do not go out in the public forum, for lack of time, because of a sometimes-exaggerated modesty, because they perceive the gesture as useless, out of a self-defense reflex, out of fear, out of comfort, etc. (the list of causes / pretexts is long). Those who do are those capable of self-sacrifice. Those who, although aware of the inequality of forces, go out into the arena and take the bull by the horns. Those who take on the problems of the scientific and academic community and communicate them to the entire society. They represent the part of the scientific community that is eager to change, to progress, to get out of the “transition” and into normalcy, to align with European values (expressively defined by Professor Frangopol in the title of an article, “The second generation of Romanian Youth”). In today's Romania, there are some voices, unfortunately very few, who do the above: they go out to fight with their bare hands, but with candor in their quiver, against an opponent armed “to the teeth” with the practices of manipulation,

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of distortion, indefinite postponement, etc. Usually, these are people who have been waiting for change for a lifetime and for whom “time lost its patience.” Their scream, sometimes desperate, a “Munch’ scream,” is heard from time to time in Romanian society. And it terrifies many, especially those who find themselves in the same state of despair. Does it also terrify those to whom it is addressed? Is their scream “Vox clamantis in deserto”? No. Of course not. I think they are aware that their example will persuade the cowards to join them. Will they be able to tip the balance of truth to their side? Will they mobilize that critical mass needed to bring about the changes so long awaited by the new generation? I think so.

Professor Petre Frangopol was one of those who, consciously taking the risks, went out into the public forum. He did it armed with scientist’s toolset: critical spirit, perseverance, lucidity, objectivity, etc. He applied a scientist’s critical analysis, in a positive sense, to political decisions and actions, which was not and is not at all convenient to the political factor.

We need such people. We need such “idealists” to “shout” our sorrows; we, who lack the courage to go out in the public arena, can get behind these people. Professor Frangopol was such a man, around whom those with the same ideals gathered. We continue his actions and continue the fight against mediocrity.