

Book Reviews

Laurențiu Vlad, *Istorie românești ale ideii de "Europa", secolele XVII-XXI (imagini, note, reflecții)*, Iași, Institutul European, 2021, 340 p.

Europe, and Romanian stances on the European paradigm seem to no longer represent today's topics of keen interest for Romanian readers with a penchant for history, unlike in the 1990s, when collections such as "The Construction of Europe" or "The Third Europe" were published by Polirom, and when authors such as Alexandru Duțu, Adrian Marino or Victor Neumann wrote about such issues. Notwithstanding all this, Professor Laurențiu Vlad from the Bucharest University has deliberately ignored this recent trend and, under the auspices of the European Institute, brought back to our attention the Romanian histories of the European idea, convincing us that they deserve to be further explored.

Laurențiu Vlad is an author who is well known to the public interested in modern Romanian history, particularly thanks to his works dedicated to topics such as the construction of national identity or the history of Romanian conservatism. His training as a historian, as well as his work as a professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest, has steered him to study the history of political ideas, mentalities and ideologies. In connection with the above-mentioned research directions, Laurențiu Vlad has researched, for several decades, the history of the European idea in the Romanian space, with a focus on the nineteenth century. He has published a significant series of studies and articles on this topic and taught university courses at the universities of Bucharest and Sibiu.

This year, the Bucharest University professor has brought this research interest to fruition by publishing a volume which, based on previous contributions, manages to provide an overview on the genesis, evolution and basic features of the European idea in the Romanian space. Even if we are not dealing with a complete and systematic history of the analyzed phenomenon, but (as the title of the study suggests) with a series of episodes that mark its evolution, the juxtaposition of the "histories" laid down in writing by the Bucharest-based professor outline an expressive mosaic of Europe as it was imagined by the Romanian scholars of the modern era. In keeping with the author's area of expertise, the focus of the work falls on the nineteenth century, with forays into the centuries that frame this period of genesis and consolidation of the European idea in Romanian culture.

The volume contains five chapters. The first is dedicated to the historiography of the subject (itself a fascinating research topic). The second discusses its prehistory, analyzing the image of Europe as it was envisioned by Romanian chroniclers of the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries. The third focuses on European echoes in the pages of *Albina Românească* (one of the first Romanian-language political and cultural periodicals), while the fourth examines the European references in the writings of Barbu Catargiu (an essential, albeit too little researched representative of Romanian conservatism). The fifth chapter explores the magazine *Ideea Europeană*, which made, in the interwar period, one of the first well-articulated efforts to promote the European (and pan-European) model in Romanian culture. What is also of great interest is the anthology of period texts on the history of the European idea offered by Laurențiu Vlad. The end of each chapter reproduces fragments from the most important historical sources that illustrate the subject.

For readers who have had the opportunity to watch “live” how this research topic has evolved over the last four to five decades (a category that also includes the author of this review), this volume offers a pleasant, colorful reading through nostalgic lenses. From the valuable analyses (some of which may seem surprising, in the context of that epoch) on the theme during the communist period, culminating with the rich production of the first decades after 1989 and continuing at a somewhat slower pace in recent years, the interest of Romanian authors for the symbolic relationship between the small country “at the mouths of the Danube” and “enlightened” Europe has not ceased to produce valuable works. The book authored by Laurențiu Vlad, a former student of Alexandru Duțu’s, carries on this tradition, standing as erudite proof of the fact that in Romania’s relationship with Europe the suffix “exit” has not yet managed to dislocate the prefix “enter”.

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