

## LECTORI SALUTEM!

The problem of the genesis of modern nations and the resulting assertion of nationhood and nationalism has long preoccupied important historians, but the issue of nationalism - seen mostly as an ideology - has become over time a favorite subject of specialists not only in history, but in many fields, ranging from philosophy and political science to sociology. Many of the current approaches to nationalism, beginning especially with the nationalism of the nineteenth century, are excessively critical, stressing the conflicts, loss, and murder committed in the name of the nation. These approaches tend to condemn all national solidarities, all the communities connected in some way to ethnic groups and nations.

Approaching the theoretical issues concerning nations and nationhood, we can distinguish two distinct notions: the first, called primordialism or perennialism, concentrates on the organic creation of nations, on their antiquity and medieval roots; the second, conventionally called modernism, sees the nation as a recent phenomenon, the result of the European modernizing process that began in the eighteenth century. A third notion can also be identified, a midpoint that sees continuity between the old ethnic groups and modern nations, perceiving them as living, lasting realities. In fact, the argument is often false, because it emerges from the distinct definitions of the concepts that described ethnicity, which manifested itself over time. What needs to be highlighted is that people have always lived in communities, based on unique means of communication (languages), the same origins (real or imaginary), and on shared beliefs, traditions, and customs. Sometimes, for some people, religious belief was primordial; for others it was blood relations (family), the language that they spoke, or the local community. But humans lived together in communities because *homo sapiens* is, by his nature, a social being. When analyzing all the forms of community or

absorbing institutions such as family, faith, and nation - we are inclined to demonize them because many atrocities have been perpetrated in their names, ignoring the deeper, primary causes of these actions. While today "murders" are committed in the name of globalization, this does not have to guide us to the idea that globalization is harmful or discredited.

Naturally, the affirmation of modern nationalism or nationality was almost a worldwide phenomenon, concurrent in widely separated areas, that generated an unparalleled, bitter, painful, and even cruel competition among those involved. In Central and Southeastern Europe in particular, following the Western model, *national ideologies aimed for a single, polity for each*, one that could reunite all the members of that particular group and maybe even others, forced to live by the rules of the majority. In Romania, the generations of intellectuals who presided over the modern national construction, who contributed to the creation of the modern national consciousness, covered almost two centuries, from 1730-1740 to the First World War. The *most active* [ed: I don't understand what this means here; too vague] generations in this respect were those who belonged to the Transylvanian School (the illuminist generation), the generation of the 1848 Revolution, and the one which preceded and prepared the unification of 1918-1920.

Simion Bărnuțiu (1808-1864) belonged to the second generation; he was a militant, but also a distinguished intellectual, professor, philosopher, philologist; truly, a complex personality of the "century of nations." Cristian Ivaneș, a young researcher - with solid and complementary specialized studies in universities in Romania, the United States, and Italy - *set for* himself the difficult *task* of recreating Simion Bărnuțiu's personality for the *American* English-speaking public, highlighting his role in the modern national construction of Romania, and the great movement of people and ideas from 1848-1849. This is a *true monograph of the character mentioned above* [ed: this is very vague and unclear; it needs to be reworded to make its meaning clear] the first one in English, accompanied by a panorama of the mid-nineteenth-century Romanian nation, with a strong emphasis on Transylvania, but *in close connection to* Moldavia and Walachia

(the three political entities that formed modern Romania). The monograph also touches on Austria, Hungary, and Italy, the places in which Bărnuțiu lived, meditated, and acted.

Aware that he is addressing a public situated far from his subject in distance, time, and perspective, the author builds a general explanatory framework, referring to the historical and theoretical definition of the Central European nations and to historical writings from Germany, the Habsburg Empire, Hungary, and Romania, emphasizing Transylvania and, especially, the mono-ethnic and ethnocentric approach of the past by each of the three main groups: Romanians, Hungarians, and Transylvanian Saxons. Then, before going deeper into the matter, Dr. Ivanes describes the time Simion Bărnuțiu lived in, the epoch of modern nations and the Revolutions of 1848-1849. Naturally, for a contemporary public, distant from the eastern part of Central Europe, it is difficult to perceive how and why these nations revolted differently, why the Hungarians acted against the House of Habsburg, and why the Romanians and the Transylvanian Saxons with a few shades were on Vienna's side (as were the Croats, Serbs, Slovaks and others). The detailed explanations, connected first of all to the different national ideals, the distinct historical situations, the way those nations were actually created, and other factors, provide the information needed for the reader to understand this complicated framework. *Simion Bărnuțiu's life and career are taken through their stages of development in order to explain the thoughts, reactions and the demeanor of this important national and political leader.* From the general European framework, to the national Romanian community just about to aggregate into modern, unitary political structures, down to the Transylvanian nations with their particularities, the author manages to reach even deeper into the smallest community cores of life – the village and family. The rural and familial group from the area of Sylvania (where Bărnuțiu was born) is presented as typical of the entire Transylvanian Romanian area: a world of serfs and priests, strengthened through very hard work done on behalf of others; humble and often resigned, but not always defeated; awakened somehow to life and hope – *this is especially true of those living north of the Mureș and the Târnava valleys – by means of the union with the Catholic Church around 1700.* This way,

Simion Bărnuțiu appears in the eyes of the author as an intellectual, national, and political product of this universe of “villages and priests from Transylvania” – as Nicolae Iorga would say – *born in a spiritual, Byzantine environment, initially educated in Romanian, then in Hungarian and Latin. Then finally in Romanian again, in the confessional schools in Blaj, influenced by his European experiences, by his faith in a Europe with equal, dignified nations full of mutual.* The backbone of this education was the trust in the vitality of the Romanian nation, seen as a fruit of ancient Rome and, consequently, of Greco-Roman classicism and Christianity, the two sustaining pillars of the entire European civilization.

This monograph highlights, as the title shows, the 1848-1849 Revolution, considered the climax of Simion Bărnuțiu’s political career. He was a born leader of his generation, well educated in the spirit of a specific collective leadership carried out in the name of the nation. Following the course of events, we can see the entire set of attitudes held by the national hero, from the idealist belief in the universal brotherhood of peoples to the faith in the emperor of Vienna (seen as a balancing factor between the peoples and nations); from the hope invested in a multinational Habsburg “fatherland” to the disappointment with the insidious politics of the Court and with the “fatherland encompassing” the Romanian people; and from ascertaining the impossibility of any cooperation with the Hungarian leaders to his faith in “our Romanian nation,” the only one that “can redeem us”.

In the post-revolutionary years, we follow Bărnuțiu – disappointed in the failure of his national ideal – in Vienna and Pavia, where he collects knowledge, role models and hopes, before returning to his projects for raising the national edifice. The author illuminates this final stage of his life: the futile struggle of the intellectual to establish a Romanian university in Transylvania; his projects for standardizing the Romanian literary language and its orthography; his support in creating a common Romanian spirit; and his didactic and scientific career in Moldavia and role in establishing the first modern Romanian university in 1860.

This monograph portrays Simion Bărnuțiu as a visionary fighting in the name of the nation, a fighter who accomplished

much during his lifetime, but who prepared the way for even more to be accomplished by his intellectual and moral descendants. He appears as the one who - not being able to implement the national revolutionary program of 1848-1849 - took it over and put it into practice as much as he could between 1849 and his death in 1864. He was both a witness and a contributor to the "small unification," which means the unification of Romania, then made up of the historical regions Walachia (without Dobrogea) and Moldavia (without Basarabia and Bucovina). He was also a witness and a contributor to the establishment of the first modern Romanian university, to the expansion of the Romanian language as a language of *schooling and education* [Ed: aren't 'schooling' and 'education' redundant?], to the introduction of the first philosophy course at university, and to the emancipation of the serfs. This monograph also depicts the posthumous Bărnuțiu, who lives through his plans put into practice by his pupils and descendants. Thus he appears as a founder of all the great accomplishments of the Romanian nation, from the University of Bucharest in 1864 and the Constitution in 1866 to the creation of national Romanian parties from the Transylvania and the Banat regions; and from the establishing of the Romanian Academy (1866) - which reunited scholars from all provinces populated by Romanians - to the declaration of absolute independence in 1877-1878 and the unification in 1918.

The author shows us through unrolling Bărnuțiu's life that he was not only a dreamer and a utopian, but a realist and a visionary, because all he planned *came to life* [Ed: how would 'reached fruition' do to replace 'came to life'?]. It is true, of course, that most of this happened decades after his death, *from* [Ed: do you mean 'in'?] the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

The message of this book is of great importance, as is its *tone*. Dr. Cristian Ivaneș explains, but does not judge; he retraces, but does not pass sentences; and, especially, he tries and succeeds in not looking at a historical figure and the world of the nineteenth century simply from the perspective of present political and civic standards. As here understood and explained, Simion Bărnuțiu

is a man of his time, but not an ordinary man; he represents that period's greatest human ideals: the quest for dignity for those great communities called nations and, among these, for his Romanian nation. In this book we see a Bărnuțiu who is monumental and human at the same time, convinced that in an unjust world of imperial formation, justice was on the side of those nations seeking emancipation. The warrior's incredible strength, carrying the centennial grief of his people on his shoulders, is *enhanced* by his great humane vision, by his humanist European spirit, and by his trust in the force of the people and in the equality, dignity, and liberty of all nations. Bărnuțiu saw a Europe of nations instead of a Europe of empires; a Europe of democratic rights and liberties instead of imperial abuse; a world of emancipation, justice, and equality instead of a world of hierarchy, discrimination and submission. Simion Bărnuțiu here transcends what is now called nationalism (in a narrow and exclusivist manner), by his generally humane openness, his faith in the force and perennality of all nations, and by his promotion of universal values through philosophy and especially law.

Dr. Cristian Ivaneș - after long, exigent, and close examination of the sources - had the talent and flair to provide readers not only an excerpt from the past, but a living world, which was the most perceptible present for its characters. So, combining his vast culture as a historian and his casual or informal voice as a journalist, with the *clarity* of a logician, and with a remarkable human kindness, the author manages to draw in the reader, to make him desire to know more and stay to the very end with his hero, here seen as the hero of the Romanian nation and one of the heroes of the age of the Europe of nations from the "century of nations." I am convinced that through this book the English-speaking public will be able to understand better the Romanian people's course through history and their destiny as participants in the worldwide concert of nations.

Prof. Dr. Ioan-Aurel Pop  
Member of the Romanian Academy of Sciences