

BUKOVINA: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PAST AND ITS ROLE OF RECREATION OF UKRAINIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS

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**Bucovina: experiența trecutului și rolul
în recrearea relațiilor ucraineano-române**

*(Traducere)**

În această lucrare, autorul analizează tendințele și rezultatele proceselor istorice desfășurate de-a lungul secolului al XX-lea și care nu au fost foarte favorabile Bucovinei. Se acordă atenție unor factori precum pierderea integrității regiunii în a doua jumătate a veacului trecut, criza conștiinței tradiționale și oportunitățile de adaptare la transformările globale moderne. Unul dintre efectele negative ale epocii marcate de revoluții și războaie I-a constituit eroziunea sau pierderea treptată (până aproape de prăbușire) a polietnicității. Aceste tendințe specifice începutului de secol XXI sunt legate de geopolitica puterilor: Bucovina și bucovinenii au fost ostatici ai propriilor decizii. Chiar și așa, din anii 1990 și până în prezent, se observă în cazul elitelor politice locale din teritoriul aflat de ambele părți ale frontierei o anumită abatere de la determinismul politico-geografic în favoarea unor scheme mai pragmatice de cooperare transregională. Un exemplu al acestei opțiuni este proiectul cultural și administrativ cunoscut sub denumirea de Euroregiunea „Prutul Superior”.

Autorul își propune să se refere la experiența istorică și culturală pe care Bucovina a parcurs-o în timpul administrației austriace (monarhice și polietnice), în timpul regimului românesc (bazat pe valori tradiționale și rurale), precum și în perioada sovietică (cu referire la politica de industrializare de după 1945, atunci când s-a încercat – și parțial s-a reușit – crearea în Cernăuți a unui „grup educațional și industrial funcțional”).

La începutul secolului al XXI-lea, situația geopolitică și geoeconomică din Bucovina, ca parte a Ucrainei și a României moderne, avea să se schimbe radical. Ucraina a devenit un stat independent, iar România a aderat la Uniunea Europeană. În contextul proceselor de integrare europeană, posibilitățile de interacțiune dintre cele două culturi vecine, de exemplu, în domeniul artei cinematografice pot fi utilizate

* Traducere: Harieta Mareci-Sabol.

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și exploatate eficient. Cât privește formarea unei „societăți a cunoașterii”, moderne, pot fi aduse în atenție schimburile științifice și simpozioanele organizate de și pentru tinerii din cele două țări vecine. De asemenea, este necesară utilizarea, pe o scară mai largă, în Ucraina, în general și în regiunea Cernăuți, în special, a experienței României în combaterea corupției.

Rezumând, se poate spune că Bucovina europeană și bucovinenii din teritoriile aflate de o parte și de alta a frontierei de stat trebuie să conștientizeze și să aprecieze valorile democrației de astăzi, precum și respectul pentru etnie și cooperarea în sferele economice și educaționale. Acest lucru poate fi facilitat nu atât de mitul austriac, ci de mitul modern al multiculturalismului, cultivat în Uniunea Europeană în anii '90 ai secolului trecut, în special de Germania și de țările mediteraneene. Cu alte cuvinte, Bucovina modernă ar trebui să încerce să devină o „insulă” a empatiei istorice – regândind experiența geopolitică negativă a secolului al XX-lea – și un model de interacțiune interstatală și de vecinătate în sens european în multe dintre sferele vieții sociale și economice din Ucraina și România.

Cuvinte cheie: identitate, dialog, modernitate, memorie, relații bilaterale.

Speaking at an international conference wonderfully organized by Institute “Bukovina”, I expressed several theses that, in my opinion, could contribute in the short and medium-term to a better understanding of the provocative history of Bukovina in the last century. My materials presented at the conference are supplemented here by some important, from my point of view, interpretations, and reflections.

Today, Europe has its own roots, but at the same time, it is trying to comprehend and master the paths to a more humane future than it was in the twentieth century, shaping in many ways the newest European utopia. As Daniel Cohn-Bendit rightly believed, Europeans should go beyond “inspired models of the nation-state”¹. Europe is gradually becoming something more than a banal geographical unit, a “conglomerate of competing states”. And today we should look at Bukovyna's realities in a new way, without outdated stereotypes and prejudices.

In the twentieth century, Bukovina, like other similar geopolitically important regions (such as Gdansk or Teszyn), repeatedly came under the jurisdiction of various states. Indeed, the “short” last century – 1914–1991, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm – was an era of extreme. And now, for 25 years, out of 77, Bukovinians have found themselves in a time of geopolitical turbulence. Historically, Bukovina was on the borders of the Roman and Slavic worlds and the tragic perturbation of 1939–1947 divided it into “Northern” and “Southern”. The injuries of 1918, 1945, and 1947 were especially noticeable (and sometimes irreparable losses) for all the inhabitants of the region – Ukrainians, Romanians, Poles, Austrians, Germans, and Jews.

¹ Кон-Бендіт Д. Европа – це остання утопія, 2000, Часопис І; <http://www.ji.lviv.ua/n19texts/deni.htm> (14 decembrie 2020).

Let's dwell on some points. Take, for example, the case of Wilson and “Wilsonism”. It is a well-known attitude of US President W. Wilson to organize post-war Central and Southern Europe on democratic principles. According to many well-known previous diplomatic discussions of 1918–1919, for example, the eastern part of Galicia was promised to be transferred to Ukraine, as was the northern part of Bukovina, where the Ukrainian population was ethnically predominant in these areas. However, after the First World War, despite the observance of ethnic demarcation of borders in many cases, liberal Wilsonism as a whole was defeated. This fiasco of democratic rhetoric was especially evident in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, where the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy, the containment of national and anarcho-communist revolutions led to an ethnic mixture and a situation of geopolitical “puff pie” in the interwar period.

Although, for example, the formation of a united Romania in 1919 was seen as the birth of a new democracy. It is no coincidence that one of the authors of the famous British magazine “The New Europe”, professor George D. Herron, noted in the article “The New Romania” that the country is roaring with “democratic aspirations”. Its young politicians, led by Transylvanian Democrats, are testing their strengths in the economic sphere, opposing archaic institutions and dreaming of seeing their own country with a well-thought-out and effective system of social renewal².

President Wilson did not fully understand that very intensive nation-building (wherever it took place) was incompatible with the classical model of democracy. It came to the point that Hitler, in talks with the British ambassador in March 1938, explicitly stated: “In Austria, the people must be interviewed, and in Czechoslovakia, the Germans must be given appropriate autonomy both culturally and in other respects. It is the simple application of the right to self-determination of peoples, which played such a large role in Wilson's Fourteen Points”³. The geopolitical transformation of the region in a democratic spirit has never become a reality. However, fortunately for the Bukovinians, in 1939–1945, Bukovina did not become one of the most bloody lands between Hitler and Stalin. Timothy Snyder writes more about Polish lands in this context.

Another thesis in the historical context for the northern part of Bukovina: after 1918, it changed its state and political affiliation five times. As a result, opinions (often dogmatic, which should not be criticized and revised), but also quite fluid cultural and historical myths changed – from Austrian to Romanian, then Soviet, and today Ukrainian. Nowadays, both Ukrainians and Romanians must gradually unite the most recent positive European myth.

² George D. Herron, “The New Romania”, in “The New Europe”, 2 octombrie 1919.

³ Запись беседы Гитлера с послом Великобритании в Германии Н.Гендерсоном 3 марта 1938 г. Документы и материалы кануна второй мировой войны 1937–1939, гг. Т.1. М., 1981, р. 56.

After all, let's go back to, say, the dramatic 1940, which, like 1918, became a bifurcation point. The Soviet myth of liberation crumbles when we read the documents of that time. Here are the impressions shared in an official-diplomatic letter about Chernivtsi after 28 June 1940, a resident of the city, the Swiss consular agent Nicholas Kunzle. He described in detail how the city inhabitants were "deprived" of prices, expropriation of land and banks during the first months of workers and peasants power, whose tanks and infantry moved from Chernivtsi to the new Soviet-Romanian border for four days in a row. I was more interested in the first consequences of such management and the psychological influences and the state of Bukovinian society. Here are some fragments of the picture of the beginning of 1941 – Chernivtsi, "a thriving city turned into a large village, where there are still factories with many workers, and the whole city is full of so-called unified faceless people who must think alike, and so will all people in Chernivtsi, in one year". Red flags have been hung on houses for six months and "no one dares to remove them". Moreover, these flags were "made of Romanian flags, from which they tore off the unnecessary and left a red stripe". About 20 thousand inhabitants left the town. Cinemas worked, but almost all films had a "propaganda bias". "Religion is ridiculed in their films, our western culture". They had the complete opposite of "our Western views in us", Kunzle himself and most Chernivtsi residents were forced to dive into "a whirlpool of these transformations and sweet-spicy stories that lead to a nervous breakdown, from which, even with good nutrition, thin and pale, the wealthy bourgeoisie and intelligentsia become half-skeletons". So, somewhere "Awakening!" – sums up the Swiss agent⁴.

However, for the sake of objectivity, I would like to emphasize that the new Soviet mythology was based not only on propaganda. The creation of the postwar part of the positive history of the Northern part of Bukovina was facilitated by the philosophy and practice of "socialist industrialism" (the new "myth" of transformations), the centre of which became Chernivtsi. Figuratively speaking, the conditional highest point of its development can be considered Orwell's 1984, when the concepts of the 1965 master plan began to be implemented, according to which the peripheral parts of Chernivtsi acquired the industrial features of a socialist city⁵. The developers of the new master plan envisaged the creation of a new industrial centre in Bukovina. All this led to the concentration of many enterprises, including those that worked on the allied military production complex – "Quartz" and "Graviton" and which together with the physics and mathematics faculties of ChNU formed, as we would say today, an innovation-industrial cluster.

⁴ Документ № 1 з Документів Швейцарського Консульського агентства у Чернівцях. Буковина: національні рухи та соціально-політичні процеси 1918–1944 рр. Погляд дипломатів (Документи), Чернівці, Зелена Буковина, 2007, рр. 203–210.

⁵ Олег Пікушенко, Значення політичних передумов для формування архітектурно-планувальної структури Чернівців кінця XVIII – початку XXI ст.; http://vlp.com.ua/files/22_5.pdf (14 decembrie 2020).

One hundred years after the Habsburg monarchy plunged into historical shadow, many contemporaries recall the "enchanted myth" of Chernivtsi in the early twentieth century. It is worth reading at least the second translation of the Memoirs, translated into Ukrainian when he remarked on the purpose of his book, written by him "to keep from the oblivion that in a few years almost no one will be interested, erased from memory and absorbed by the time". Referring to the effects of war on the temperament of Bukovinians, the writer underlined that "politics has eroded from the people what remained of them from old Austria"⁶.

Robert Musil once gave the formula of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (Austrian and Hungarian) Hungarian, however, without the right to open brackets. Today, the European Union, as a new democratic but polyarchic system, unites all the peoples of Central and Southern Europe with the future inclusion of Ukrainians. It is also likely that the consolidation of new democracies will be preferred to their disintegration. And Bukovina can become a kind of East Strasbourg in such a model. The alternative in the event of the collapse or stagnation of the European project in Central Europe is what Metternich once said: Vienna will be fixed in the minds of most Europeans as a real frontier of traditional Europe.

It is clear that for the growth of cooperation in Bukovina at the beginning of the 21 century, not only the efforts of historians are needed. We need real cooperation in the economic, social, and cultural spheres, and the people of Bukovina on both sides of the border are striving for this. The well-known Euroregion should not just be a bureaucratic project, but become a people's Euroregion as a form and instrument of Ukraine's "soft", systemic European integration in the medium term⁷. Both within the framework of the European strategy, both Ukraine and Romania must develop new values. Historians, experts and educators must also share a joint European vision of the future and points of contact with the historical past. It is difficult to achieve, but there is no other adequate way. We must learn not only to remember but also to (partially) forget, and even forgive. Perhaps, being in the European discourse, one should not insist on the feeling of insult, the so-called resentment, leaving it behind the brackets of public space in Bukovina. The struggle (in the old sense) of national historiographies will remain, but it should not be decisive. It raises the fundamental question of how to combine approaches to nation-building with a common European identity that is still in its infancy, that is, to move somewhat away from the classical understanding of Raymond Lully's "memoria" for the harmonization of relations.

Perhaps today is the time to start work on a joint Ukrainian-Romanian intellectual task-work – a projective textbook "History of Bukovina in the

⁶ Дроздовський Г. Тоді в Чернівцях і довкола. Спогади старого австрійця, пер. з нім, Петра Рихла, Чернівці, Книги ХХІ, 2019, 288 с.

⁷ „Єврорегіон «Верхній Прут»”: досвід, особливості, виклики, шляхи інтенсифікації співробітництва, Укл. С. М. Гакман, Н. В. Нечаєва-Юрійчук, З. С. Бройде, Чернівці, „Букрек”, 2020, с. 29.

twentieth century". It would be a real contribution not only to the educational process but to all aspects of the bilateral relations between Ukraine and Romania for the coming decades. It is worth taking the first steps in this direction and completing the first part of the project with the probable title "History of Bukovina: to the unity of the European spirit through the diversity of national practices".

Only on this complicated path will Bukovinians in Ukraine and Romania be able to avoid the traps of geopolitical neo-isolation and ineffective bureaucratic decisions of the two European nations, which must overcome the syndrome of victims of old foreign policy decisions. The mental boundaries of the past should not be the boundaries of the present and the future⁸. And in the geography of ever-present Europe (before the coronavirus) also has overcome of "natural realities", so political and economic pictures are not "objective portraits", but rather "subjective constructions"⁹.

Of course, there are several alternatives to the modern European vision of international relations and their history in Central Europe. The first is related to a marginal political culture produced by anarchist and far-left intellectuals. The second alternative is for conservative historians of both countries to support the existing national-state (and stereotypical) status quo in their views on the historical events in Bukovina in the twentieth century. We, those who work on historical documents without unnecessary emotions, should not forget about the existence in both Ukraine and Romania of representatives of distinct (sometimes profane) youth subculture, for whom the historical difficulties of the twentieth century should be explained in simple and accessible language of the blogosphere. As the researcher Vyktor Vashkevych notes, young people, choosing their place in society, "focus on a simplified, primitive social world"¹⁰. After all, if we replace the modern vision of European identity with old conservative monadological views on history, we will deepen the existing scepticism. I will refer to the self-citation and quote my thesis expressed in the discussion on NATO enlargement in 2000, so 20 years ago: "For young people, the values of democracy, freedom and openness can become a kind of phantom, a work of propaganda and the liberal-democratic West (as it was for the generation of the '60s) will remain a memory of past days"¹¹.

Let's ask the question: has anything changed significantly since then and is any European mythology effective today? I am not here for simplification, but for taking into account this major factor in educational activities. Not everyone will be happy with the changes of our historical vision, but Bukovyna of the 21 century

⁸ Sean Lang, *History without frontiers. A Practical Guide to International Projects in Schools in Europe*, Strasbourg, Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1996, p. 7.

⁹ Домінік Муазі, *Геополітика емоцій. Як культури страху, приниження та надії змінюють світ*. К., Брайт Стар Паблішинг, 2018, p. 39.

¹⁰ Віктор Вашкевич, *Пріоритети сприйняття історії сучасною молоддю. Національна та історична пам'ять*, 36. наук. праць. Вип. 6. К., „НВЦ «Пріоритети»", 2013, p. 26.

¹¹ Володимир Фісанов, *Українські реалії і НАТО. Проблеми прикордонних регіонів у контексті розширення НАТО: Матеріали науково-практичного семінару*, Чернівці, 9 листопада 2000, p. 81.

should become a field not of "controversial history", but a land of strengthening trustee on our European border.

Conclusions and suggestions

Intellectual communication on the Ukrainian-Romanian cross-border, which depends on the readiness of innovative historians and political experts for a meaningful dialogue on the historical themes of the twentieth century, should promote an emotionally positive long-term bilateral dialogue that would support relations between Romania and Ukraine in the new century.

Based on this basic thesis, I propose: First, to form an agenda for further bilateral dialogue of professional historians on the most serious and still irritating issues of the history of Bukovina in the twentieth century. Secondly, if both sides of the future dialogue agree, it is necessary to form discussion groups and hold a joint debate of critical issues, within professional seminars (maybe 4–2 in Ukraine and Romania) and present its results to the interested public and press of both our countries.

One more question: is there something that prevents us all from following the path of purification of thoughts and meanings? In my opinion, this is the inertia of thinking: as members of the conservative class, the historians are very often immersed in detail and obsessed with the protection of old and new mythologists. In addition, a certain projection of fear sometimes persists: some researchers and officials believe that unpleasant conflict topics should not be touched. Therefore, in all professional discussions that may arise, it is necessary to avoid haste in conclusions, pettiness and excessive politicization. In this sense, one of the ways should be the formation of a renewed memory policy in both Ukraine and Romania. It is how the historian Serhiy Troyan writes about it. According to the researcher, although the construction of a more adequate collective memory is not yet embodied in historical discourse, it is not worth talking about a single European space. It is, first of all, a space in which "we can engage in dialogue and find commonly agreed answers to questions"¹². In our case, we are talking about some critical issues in the history of Bukovina in the 20th century. Only in this way will we be able to separate myths from facts and ultimately reach a new consensus on the Carpathian cross-border, to achieve a sense of historical empathy, at least in educated and intellectual circles.

Ultimately, the possibility of such impartial discussion between Ukrainian and Romanian historians can become one of those social guidelines that can bring the societies of both our countries closer to integration into the liberal international order as truly conscious European democratic actors, able to resist on waves of authoritarianism and possible anarchy in the Centre of contemporary Europe.

¹² Сергій Троян, *Компаративний аналіз сучасних політик пам'яті в Україні та Республіці Польща. Національна та історична пам'ять*, 36. наук. праць. Вип. 6. К., „НВЦ «Пріоритети»", 2013, p. 231.