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Culture and Cooperation during the Interwar Period

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Abstract: Starting from the most important *Publications of the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (1925-1946)* we will explore the ideas concerning culture and personalities involved in the intellectual cooperation during the Interwar Period. Pointing out the role that the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation had and the Romanian contribution to this cooperation is another purpose of this article.

Keywords: culture; cooperation; League of Nations; International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation; interwar period

The internecine, unprecedented confrontation of states and empires in the Great War has shaken the world and it determined the call to rational choices for building a peace that would make a similar experience impossible for the future. The Society of Nations, as the main institutional body representing rationality, would contribute to conflict management, overcoming the significant moral crisis and the insurance of a just, equilibrated/real peace. In this context, intellectual cooperation of all the illuminated minds of those times would be involved in this forum, that would constitute special structures in this sense and it would create an extended international debate.

After referring to the distinct stages of the “cultural interwar building” and to the objectives and paradigm of this cooperation, we will insist, in this article, on the most influent acceptations that culture and cooperation carried during this period. We will underline also the Romanian contribution and also the importance of the Romanian intellectuals’ involvement in the cultural cooperation of the time.

Regarding the steps of the “cultural interwar building”, researchers focused rigorously on trying to understand the mechanisms, the endeavors, achievements or the causes of the failure. (Iacobescu, 1988; Renoliet, 1999; González, 2014 etc.)

It was shown that “the institutional concretization of the intellectual cooperation concept took place in 1922, by creating the International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation, which brought together famous intellectuals such as Henri Bergson, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, Paul Valery and it was considered back then as one of the most influential intellectual international organizations.” (Carbunaru, p. 130).

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The first meeting of this Committee took place in Geneva, in August 1922 and between 1922-1939 national commissions were created in member states of the Society of Nations as well as in non-member states (USA, etc.), having the role to support the activity of the Society of Nations¹. The National Commission for Intellectual Cooperation of Romania was founded in 1923 by the initiative of Romanian Academy, with governmental support and it was reorganized in 1929 (Iacobescu, 1988, p. 243; Carbutaru, 2013, p. 138). First, it was managed by Vasile Parvan, then by Gh. Titeica. As for the commission's secretary, the role was taken by Dr. Gh. Marinescu, replaced afterwards by Al. Busuioceanu. Among the members, also, Nicolae Iorga, Alexandru Lapedatu, Elena Vacarescu, Ovid Densusianu, Ioan Dragu, Dimitie Gusti, Constantin Chiritescu, Emil Racovita, etc were representative (Iacobescu, 1988, p. 244). At the meetings, rectors of the four universities in Iasi, Bucharest, Cernauti and Cluj joined (Carbutaru, 2013, p.13). Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu was not only the president of the General Assembly of the Society of Nations for 1930 and 1931 but also one of the members of the International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation.

The International Organisation for Intellectual cooperation had, as the main executive body, the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC) , created in 1924, located in Paris, which would make the connection between the Council and the Society of Nations' Assembly on the one hand and the involved governments of the states and national commissions, on the other hand. Another body was created in 1928, the International Educational Cinematographer from Rome.

The Society of Nations' activity in regard to intellectual cooperation from 1919 to 1946, analyzed by J. Reinoliet as forgotten steps in UNESCO's historical path, is highlighted through the actuality and value of the ideals and solutions drawn in relations to the role of culture in peacekeeping problematic. The historian underlined, starting with the questions whether "the culture is the fundamental, necessary item or is it the inevitable product of a political construction based on nations or, even more, supranationally", that the current understanding of the idea that leads intellectuals of the interwar era to have a vision on a more ambitious kind of insuring worldwide peace, projected through the Society of Nations, under the name of universally accepted values, at which they recognize themselves to belong: the institutionalization of a supranational government, with a military power and enforced by an affective nucleum (Renoliet, 1999, pp. 319-320).

The mentioned analyst talked about the presence of two visions, two different eras under the two logos: UNESCO, having the Anglo-Saxon influence, characterized by the spread of its knowledge and the IIIC (International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation), having a French inspiration which would engage the elites in guiding the population in creating "a Society of Spirits", that would support the Society of Nations, in Paul Valery's expression (Reinoliet, p. 325). From the status of "instrument of French cultural influence" where the nation's criteria was promoted, the IIIC evolves after 1931 to being apolitical, adding descentralisation, which leads also to "quitting when facing dictatures" (Renoliet, p. 332).

From the perspective of oriental analysts, a paradigm shift of IIIC is produced: from the international intellectual cooperation and the universal intellectual community envisaged in the 1920s to the particularity of culture and an organization among national cultures, a "League of Cultures" providing the international basis of national organizations for cultural exchange (Saikawa, 2009).

Indeed, at the first plenary session of ICIC, in 1922, Nitobe Inanzo defined the characteristics of "intellectual cooperation" talking about "the step to be taken by the League to facilitate intellectual

¹ The first National Commission for intellectual cooperation was created in Latvia, in December 1922 and the Romanian one, in 1923, being in the first group of 12 National Commission created until the end of 1923.

relations between peoples, particularly in respect of the communication of scientific information”¹ (Saikava, 2009, p. 3). It is obvious that the ICIC, influenced by the ideas of La Fontaine and Murray on intellectual cooperation, identifies itself as a sort of universal community by intellectuals all over the world.

Michel Lheritier, Secretary of the International Committee of Historical Sciences spoke as well about the objectives of the intellectual cooperation in 1929 while emphasizing that this collaboration mechanism “creates connections between intellectuals through the creation of associations, congresses and promotes their collaboration,” targets even the “problem of a universal language”, “diminishes the efforts and promotes exchanges” producing tools for intellectual work (dictionaries, directories, corpora of documents, indexes). Above all “it ensures a perfect and complete movement, in time and space, of the results of the intellectual work that have the aim to relieve us of the efforts already made by others. Nothing would be lost and this would open up an unlimited creative field”, he said (Lheritier 1929, p. 730). Paul Valery spoke of a Society of Spirits having the aim of supporting the League of Nations while Julien Luchaire, director of the Institute, WAS referring at “the world as intellectual construction year”, emphasizing That “the world of tomorrow Would Be a single structure built upon three structures : political organization, economic organization, intellectual organization” (Luchaire, 1929, p. 196).

The concepts of culture and intellectual cooperation were debated during that time in relation to those of law /peace and force/ war. Einstein's epistolary dialogue is illustrative to this point. As a member of International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation and, since 1927, president of the International Committee against Fascism, he conceived it in 1933 together with Freud, about the war, under the auspices of International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC) and Society of Nations. Launched by Einstein in the summer of 1932 and published in 1933 by IIIC in the *Correspondence* Collection under the title *Why War?*, the dialogue is introduced in the context of the growing concern of the danger of war. While asked to provide moral support to the League of Nations in its struggle against war during the debate regarding the role of law and power in social and international relations, Freud believes that the concept of violence is more appropriate to this occurrence than the one of force. He sees the Culture as a tremendous struggle between Eros and Hatred, Destruction and the Super-ego - as an internalization of the death pull. He considers that one cannot suppress the destructive impulses of the human being, as the “Bolsheviks” claimed, but they may be channeled. “To fight war, we must appeal to Eros, to love, identifying people one to another,” expresses the scientist while emphasizing that “we are pacifists because of organic reasons for that culture modifies the quasi-organic impulses, assisting the development of the intellect against the pulsating life and insuring the inner reverse of the aggressive instinct. Everything that strives for the development of culture, strives against war” concluded his letter to A. Einstein² (Renoliet, 1999, p. 318).

In 1936 at the 80th Freud's anniversary in Vienna, Thomas Mann considered the psychoanalysis as a cultural element in radical opposition to Nazism (*Romain Rolland-Sigmund Freud, Correspondence...*, 1999, p. 379) In the interwar Romanian cultural environment, the culture is seen not only as a dimension of the joint constructive effort towards peace, but also as a new, noble and spiritual ground, where the confrontation and spiritual competition is placed (Sperantia 1929 f. 21). On the fact that through intellectual cooperation the League of Nations aims “not uniformity” but the advancement of specificities and “the strengthening of spirits with the cultural weapon that does not kill but refreshes

¹ League of Nations, *Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, Minute of the First Session, Geneva, August 1st-5th, 1922*, Geneva, 1922, p. 3, Cf T. Saikava, 2009, p.3.

² A. Einstein and S. Freud, *Why war ?*, IICI, SN, 1933, p.63, cf. Renoliet, 1999, p. 318

and completes” insisted, in an article published in the Oradea city publication *Cele trei Crisuri* in 1929, dedicated to the League of Nations, the Professor Eugene Speranta. The role of culture in the sublimation of destructive impulses of individuals is properly understood through Freudian understanding by Professor Speranta who concludes his article while saying: “I do not know if the organizers of the League of Nations, while embracing the intellectual cooperation as one of the greatest concerns, took into consideration the truth that to the combat forces of People we must allocate a way of inhibition, though this action has, from this point of view an unsurpassed importance and its success presents a great additional warranty” (Sperantia, 1929, f. 21).

Daniel Laqua stressed on the fact that “many protagonists of intellectual cooperation viewed global order as a dialogue between ‘civilizations’. In this way went the cultural and political thought of Gilbert Murray and Alfred Zimmern and several very illustrative publications of the 1930s especially the IICI series on Civilizations, Ibero-American Collection, Japanese Collection and the volume *East and West*, based on a correspondence between Gilbert Murray and the poet Rabindranath Tagore (Laqua, p. 231; *List of Publication of IIC...* p. 4, pp. 9-10).

Alfred E. Zimmern, the first professor of International Relations in the world, written the book entitled *Learning and Leadership: a study of the Needs and Possibilities of International Intellectual Cooperation*, Oxford University Press, 1928 which exposes a philosophy of education which avoids the drawbacks of a narrow nationalism and cosmopolitanism without foundation (*Intellectual Cooperation*, 1, 1929, p. 55).

International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation elaborated publications that would reflect its efforts and contribution in the direction of building a more peaceful world under the circumstances of a “changing world” (Popa. 2014). The *List of Publications of the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation* (IIC) 1925-1946 prepared by the UNESCO Archive Section starting from the *List* issued by IIC in 1945, mentioned the *Collections*, (the known “Entretiens” and “Correspondence” but also “Cahiers”, Collection of Dossiers of International Cooperation and Scientific Collections), the “*Volumes*” (among which, Social Sciences and International Relations, Danubian Studies) and *Periodical publications* (*List of Publications of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation*, 1946, p. 3).

By their influence and echo, the most important “*Entretiens*” were those on *The Future of the Culture*, organized in Madrid, in May 1933 and *The Future of the European Spirit*, organized at Paris from 16th to 18th of October by the French Committee for European Cooperation and chaired by Paul Valery. In the same time, the most relevant Correspondence, are the volumes entitled *For a society of spirits* (1933), *Why war?* (1933), *Spirit, Ethics and War* (1934), *Civilizations: East –West, Genius of North Latinity* (1935) etc.

For the history of the ideas promoted by the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation very important are the descriptive abstracts on the activity in all areas of the Institute (1931-1938), entitled *The Year of the Intellectual Cooperation* (*List of Publications of IIC...*, 1946, p. 6).

Publications of the IIC and its the activity for intellectual cooperation itself are part of the cultural dimension of the international relations during Interwar Period, base for the actual cultural diplomacy.

In his article named *Romanian Interwar Cultural Diplomacy. Mircea Eliade’s case*, Lucian Jora talks about a distinct category of diplomatic officials, “writers, philosophers, men of letters and press” as Lucian Blaga, Eugen Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade – all future diplomatic officials (Jora, 2009, pp.83-94). Mircea Eliade, cultural counselor in London (1940-1941) and cultural attaché in Lisbon (10 feb.1941-15 September 1945) did not consider himself a *career diplomat* but a *volunteer diplomat*

(Jora, 2009, p. 86). *The Portuguese Journal*, published in Romania in 2006 containing his daily notes during the Lisbon mission, offers suggestions about how the great religions' historian conceived the cultural activity of representing his country and regarding the effects of this opinion on his reasoning. His synthesis *Os Romanos Latinos del Oriente*, published in April 1943, is "an initiative that in its way was not equalized in the Romanian cultural diplomacy in the sense of a history written from the perspective of a horizon of waiting and in relation to the interests of the public opinion in the host country." (Jora, 2009, p. 86)

Lucian Blaga, philosopher-poet, was press adviser since 1926, than cultural attaché to the Romanian Legation in Warsaw, Lisbon, Bern and Vienna and minister plenipotentiary in Portugal (1938-1939) working for fourteen years in this field. Based on its original conception expressed in the volumes of *Trilogia Culturii (The Trilogy of Culture)* the philosopher-diplomat talks about culture as being the "the specific way of existence of the human being in the Universe", "an ontological mutation" that it distinguishes man from other animals, "the result of human efforts to reveal the Mystery " in whose dimensions he lives. He distinguishes between culture, which "responds to the human existence through mystery and revelation", and civilization, that "answers to the existence through self-preservation and security". Unlike O. Spengler, Lucian Blaga claims that between these two forms there is a profound difference of ontological nature and not "biological age differences," not being possible to transform cultures through aging in civilization, as Spengler believes when he states that every culture transforms itself through aging in a civilization. He talks about a "stylistic seal" of a culture. Eliade confessed that he highly appreciated Blaga's conception because it brought the highest possible praise to the Man while defining it "creator of culture" (*Eliade talking with Blaga...*, 1937, p. 11) Emphasizing that "the Society of Nations is not a moral Academia", not a "a confraternity of technicians", but a "political institution with the mission of preventing war", Nicolae Titulescu, the most authorized Romanian interwar voice in the field of international politics and international law¹, synthesized, in 1937², "the essence even of his life", talking about the necessary actions and Romanian political and theoretical /cultural contributions for maintaining the Peace in the new international context. His conclusion was that "Peace in order, law in perpetual becoming, to follow the changing course of the life, the human soul in constant work to make itself to achieve even concrete forms of thinking with an incessant ascent generosity, these are the conditions required to overcome the chaos and for an organized life to which all human beings aspire" (Titulescu, 2007, p. 229).

Conclusions

Our analysis pointed out some touches/comments on the rapport of the concepts "Culture" and "Cooperation" during the Interwar Period, their tools and connection with the most important preoccupation of that time, to maintain and continuously achieve the Peace. Activity of the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation under the Society of Nations' egide was the catalyzer of a worldwide cultural activity, with an elitist French seal, evaluating from that "Society of Spirits" that should fortify the "Society of Nations" to an apolitical activity, adding decentralisation, which leads also to "quitting when facing dictatures". A "paradigm shift" of IIC was produced, from a universal intellectual community, envisaged in the 1920s, to an organization among national cultures, a "League of Cultures" providing the international basis of national organizations for cultural

¹ See also about this (Daşcoviciu, 1935; Maftai, 2012, p. 17).

² Conference held by Nicolae Titulescu at the University Komensky in Bratislava when it awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa , Bratislava, 19 June 1937.

exchange". Romania was an active contributor to the activity of the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, formulating original theoretical and practical solutions.

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