

The Context's Influence on the Evolution of Cioran: The Options of an Engaged Philosopher

Mara Magda Maftai

Abstract—The article emphasizes the ideological commitment of the philosopher Emil Cioran. It presents firstly Cioran's works on the theme announced by the title, then the European context that determined the political option of Cioran and a brief analysis of his relationship with History during his French period. The anti-Semitism of Cioran was favored by his attachment to a few philosophers, but also by the European extremist and anti-Semitic context. The article seeks to demonstrate that the philosopher Cioran, known more for his pessimism and nihilism, maintained in time an obsessive relationship with History. His political philosophy is as important as his subjective philosophy, better known than the former.

Keywords—Cioran, French writings, History, Iron Guard

I. INTRODUCTION

THE Romanian-French philosopher, whose centenary we celebrated in 2011, is again brought into discussion by Western specialists, due to his far right political options, expressed during his youth, to his considerations regarding the ideological evolution of nations, therefore due to his obsessive relationship with History. Cioran was especially known as the pessimist, nihilist philosopher, who continued the philosophic tradition of Schopenhauer, of Nietzsche, etc. Nevertheless, at the same time, his favorite philosophers were also marked by anti-Semitism. From Tacitus to Voltaire, many intellectuals expressed their anti-Semitic ideas. As concerning Nietzsche, his anti-Semitism is more obvious during his youth, while that of Schopenhauer consisted rather in a philosophical, metaphysical attitude, and not in a personal resentment or in an attitude determined by an economic motivation, as noted Thomas Louis in *Les raisons de l'antijudaïsme*[14].

Besides his readings, the extremism of Cioran was also favored by the extremist anti-Semitic European context².

¹Mara Magda Maftai is a reader at the University of Bucharest. She holds a Ph.D. in economics and a second Ph.D. in literature on « Cioran and the young generation ». She is also associated member at CERACC – Université Sorbonne la Nouvelle, Paris 3. She is a Ph.D. candidate at Université Paris-Sorbonne 4. She published numerous articles on the interwar Romanian nationalism, on the relationship of Cioran, Eliade, Noica etc with the Iron Guard.

²Modern Romania, between its unification (1918) and the instauration of communism, therefore in a very short period, passed from democracy to the royal dictatorship of the King Carol the 2nd, then to the military dictatorship of the Marshal Ion Antonescu and finally to the nationalism of the far right, before indulging itself properly in communism. The country experienced a real concentration of ideologies and government policies, which made it an even more unstable actor in Europe.

The interwar Romanian liberalism had very strong inflections of dirigisme. In 1923, the Liberal Party voted a new Constitution, which gave equal rights to all minorities, Jews included, a decision which had negative consequences on the domestic political scene. The introduction of the universal suffrage gave to all individuals, regardless of their ethnicity, the right to benefit equally from private property, education and many economic advantages. At the same time, the line between democracy and totalitarianism became very easy to surpass, because of the difficulty to manage the problem of Jewish rights, whose access to the electoral arena was suddenly facilitated.

What started as authoritarianism, turned rapidly into totalitarianism, encouraged by the propitious European context, by the erroneous approach to Germany (stimulated by both the King Carol the 2nd and the Marshal Ion

In 2011, Cioran is published for the first time in the Pléiade Edition, unfortunately only with the writings produced during his French period. The editors insist here on his too well-known philosophical dimension, ignoring thus the less popular side of his political options, their origin and evolution. In 2002, it was Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, who attempted to demonstrate the political commitment of Cioran, but always accusing him without trying to understand the causes of his ideological engagement, nourished by his readings, but also especially by the political context.

Very late, in 2009, the interest of Western researchers awakessuddenly as regarding Cioran's political past that he tried to avoid speaking of during all the time spent in France, almost half a century. Nevertheless, there are not enough relevant studies published in the West, that analyze not only his legionary past (studies which exist in Romanian)[11] - [17], but also the determination Cioran had to embrace the far right and the manner his relationship with History changed or not once he arrived in France. On 2 of April 2009, there appears in *Le Figaro littéraire* the article *Le Péché de jeunesse de Cioran*, signed by SébastienLapaque, a thought-provoking article as regarding the ideological passion of Cioran. The article announces in the same time the appearance of three books of Cioran and on Cioran. Firstly, *Transfiguration of Romania*, published by L'Herne, which represents the first complete translation (including also the chapter *National Collectivism* where Cioran manifests his hate against Jews and Hungarians) from Romanian of his book published in 1936 by the Publishing House Vremea, translation done by Alain Paruit. L'Herne also publishes the translation of the volume *De la France*, translation done by the same Alain Paruit. Most importantly, the same publishing house edits *Cahier Cioran*, coordinated by LauranceTacou, the daughter of Constantine Tacou, dear friend of Cioran.

The large volume contains some of Cioran'spolitical articles published during his Romanian period and also the speech of Cioran entitled *The inner profile of the Captain*, held at "Radio Bucharest," when the Iron Guard[15] was in power, a speech of a Cioran fiery by the head of the Legionaries, CorneliuCodreanu-Zelea.

Cioran's political passion is reflected in all his articles published during the Romanian period, in all his letters sent from Germany and from France to his colleagues of generation. Most of his articles are still dissipated in the

Antonescu), by the extent of unemployment, but also by anti-Semitism. The historical conditions generated by the unification of all Romanian provinces and by the fact that the King Carol the 2nd courted Germany in order to obtain its help so as to put an end to the domestic political instability, generated by himself, both created an environment favorable to the development of anti-Semitic reactions to a people, who had never proved racial feelings before. Anti-Semitism had also been thoughtfully cultivated by the Iron Guard, which invoked the poverty of youngsters, the increased number of Jewish students in universities, the important economic positions held by Jews to the detriment of Romanians, in order to impose a false Romanian resentment against Jews. According to Stefan Zeletin, on the contrary, the resentment against Jews occurred further back in 1830, when Jewish merchants and usurers arrived in Romania with their foreign capital and expertise, ruining the traditional landowners' families.

reviews of the time such as *Vremea*, *Acțiunea*, *Calendarul*, *Gândirea* etc. Some articles are collected in the volumes published in Romanian such as *Revelațiile durerii (The Revelations of Pain)*, edited in 1990 by the Publishing House Echinox and *Singurătatea și destin, 1931 - 1944 (Solitude and Destiny ...)*, edited in 1991 by the Humanitas Publishing House. To all his articles, we add, obviously, his incendiary volume *Transfiguration of Romania*.

Cioran continues in the West his passion for the ideology of nations, for the political evolution of civilizations, also for losers, but in a much calmer manner. However, his considerations on political philosophy are not at all negligible. They occupy the same important place as his reflections on which his subjective philosophy is constructed. Parts of *Bréviaire des vaincus*, *Syllogisme de l'amertume*, *Tentation d'exister*, *De la France*, also of *Histoire et Utopie* fully contribute with parts from *Entretiens*, *Correspondance* and essential parts from *Cahiers I, II et III* to draw important conclusions on Cioran's relationship with History.

II. THE POLITICAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT AND ITS ROLE IN DETERMINING THE IDEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT OF CIORAN

The entire history of Europe between the two wars was marked by the nationalist revolt of Germany and by Hitler's philosophy, about which Cioran wrote in the article *Impresii din Munchen. Hitler înconștiințagermană (Impressions from Munich. Hitler in the German Consciousness)* published in *Vremea* (a publication of the Romanian far right), in July 15, 1934: "Nowadays, there is no a politician who inspires me more sympathy and admiration than Hitler"[4]. The economic crisis of the 1930s increases the unemployment, which affects a quarter of the German population. In addition, Georges Bensoussan, a Moroccan-born French historian, known for writings such as *Histoire de la Shoah*[2], thinks that the whole 19th century German philosophy (with the exception of Nietzsche at maturity) was influenced by pessimism and anti-Semitism, so exactly by the same ingredients that characterize the philosophy of Cioran. The fight against "the foreign element", the Jew, began even in 1517 with the "theses of Wittenberg," when Luther opposed himself to the Pope and the German people started believing itself *electd people*, with a mission to accomplish. From that moment, the German philosophers had been accompanying politicians in their elitist delirium. The death of God, professed later by Nietzsche, fueled racism and the ideology of the *new man*, which animated the Bolsheviks, the Fascists and the legionnaires (the three ideologies being supported by an impressive number of youngsters), but also later on the communism. The ideology of the *new man* is to be found at the heart of any totalitarian program, because it feeds the belief of the individual in an essential role played by him in history[7]. Anti-Semitism was nourished by the identity crisis of Germany, a country with an old anti-Semitic tradition, but also Russia and Romania occupy a good position. Anti-Judaism was supported by a large number of outstanding philosophers. Hitler's nationalist philosophy is sustained by Nietzsche's sister, responsible not only of the falsification of his brother's texts, but also of the

omission of many connotations of his philosophy³. But Nietzsche was not completely innocent. During his youth, as Cioran also, he was influenced by Wagner and Schopenhauer; but, all in all, his anti-Semitic remarks are moreover driven by the type of Judaism (lifestyle, tradition, etc.), that fueled the existence of the Galileans. The rehabilitation of Nietzsche was done by a considerable corpus of translators and philosophers such as Walter Kaufmann or Yovel Yirmayihu in *Les juifs selon Hegel et Nietzsche*. Besides Nietzsche, Cioran was much influenced by Spengler with his abuse of game of opposites and his preference for contradictions.

The interwar Romania chose, because of its representative, the Marshal Antonescu, to sign an alliance with Hitler. But even before this alliance, Romania was following the German National Socialist doctrine, anti-Jewish, anti-communist and anti-Christian, embodied by the Iron Guard. The same as Hitler, the Iron Guard, in the person of its leader Horia Sima and lately of Corneliu Codreanu-Zelea, hated the parliamentarianism and militated for the force of the masses, being a supporter of the fight against the Bolsheviks and thus against the Jewry [10].

Hitlerism had a good expansion because it benefited from the support of intellectuals in all fields: historians, journalists, philosophers etc. Also in Romania, the Iron Guard was supported by a very large group of young intellectuals, formed by the professor Nae Ionescu and known as the "young generation", among which we enumerate: Eliade, Cioran, Eugen Ionescu, Noica etc. The professor Nae Ionescu played a very important role in the legionary engagement of Cioran, Eliade and of more than thirty outstanding intellectuals of the time.

Nae Ionescu began to support the Iron Guard because of his hate and desire to revenge against King Carol the 2nd, as Cioran reveals it in *Entretiens*. Nevertheless, all his colleagues of generation knew it, such as Vulcanescu, the one who analyzes in detail the phenomenon of the "young generation" in several books[16]. Nae Ionescu's dispute with the King determined the shift of the whole "young generation" to legionarism. By copying Hegel, Nae Ionescu opposes Judaism to Christianity (Orthodox in the case of Romanians), religion of love. In this context, the mandatory nature of the law, which falls from top to bottom, must be removed and filled with love that evolves in the opposite direction, from bottom to top. The Iron Guard received from Nae Ionescu the intellectual justification it needed. The Iron Guard pretended itself relying on Christian theology, on the belief in God. The movement attributed itself the three principles of the Church, "on the way to unify with God: repentance, purification and perfection, that is to say, the change of the will, the release of sufferings and the goal of perfect love"[10]. The same as Hitlerism, the Iron Guard prevails itself of assassinations⁴.

³Only Franz Overbeck, professor of theology at Basel University and friend of Nietzsche, will oppose to Elisabeth. But the opinions of Overbeck will be confirmed only after the collapse of the Reich. Later on, the German philosopher Karl Schlechta will provide further explanations in *Le Cas Nietzsche*, published by Gallimard in 1990, on the distortions undergone by the work of Nietzsche and caused by his sister Elisabeth

⁴We can list some figures assassinated by the legionnaires: I. G. Duca in 1933, Armand Călinescu in 1939, General Argeșanu in the massacre from Jilava in November 1940, N. Iorga, V. Madgearu and V. Iamandi in

The ideas of death and of sacrifice are imposed in the name of accomplishing the transfiguration of the country, plagued by mass poverty and by its disillusionment in the democratic system. Such as in Germany and France, in Romania, before 1930, there was still a clear separation between the political and the philosophical commitments of young intellectuals. The war engendered a crisis of the spirit, as it was identified by Valéry, Freud, Husserl, Bergson, etc. The Iron Guard in Romania wanted to establish itself as a movement with a spiritual character, striving for "a spiritual elite". In his book *Pentru legionarii (For the legionnaires)*, C. Z. Codreanu wrote, "a movement does not mean a status, a program or a doctrine. These may represent the reason of the movement, they can define its purpose, its organizational system, its tools etc., But not the movement itself (...) To create a movement means, firstly, to create, to give birth to a state of mind, which is not to be found in the reason but in the soul of the masses. This is the essence of the Legionary Movement »[8]. According to C.Z. Codreanu, the decisions and the developments of the Legion were founded on the spiritual character of the movement, on the exacerbation of the emotional rather than of the rational. Although many Western thinkers considered at the time the rise of Nazism as a crisis of mind, so as a regression to primary instincts, the Iron Guard was able to return the spiritual character in its own favor, using the theological argument.

The awareness of murders committed by the Nazis and by the Iron Guard (even if in a smaller extent) was a process that took time. We realized very late that the relationship between the economic crisis of the 1930s and the expansion of the National Socialists was in a relation of immediate causality. Thus, the genocide against the Jews contributed to the awakening of the collective consciousness as regarding the atrocities committed by the war.

Cioran feels compelled, once arrived in France, to deny his legionary past and construct a different relationship with History. Such as Heidegger, he had published ultra-nationalists texts and also such as Heidegger, he would always outline a philosophy concerned with his own experience. Cioran was, as well as Heidegger, obsessed with death, the legionary one at the beginning of his career, lately turned into a metaphysical death, anguished by his limited existence in time. Neither Cioran, nor Heidegger had the courage to defend their totalitarian ideas until the end. Moreover, all the intellectuals, who supported the National Socialist doctrines, were quickly inclined to deny them once the war was lost by Germany and even more once the genocide against the Jews was made public. Heidegger changed parts of his texts as in the case of *L'époque des conceptions* published first in 1938 and republished then in 1950, purified of any racist allusion, such as Cioran eliminated the fourth chapter from his book *Transfiguration of Romania* and strictly monitored the republishing of the volume that would contain his political articles from his Romanian period, *Singurătatea și destin*.

November 1940. Once the National Legionary State was formed (September 6, 1940) and once the legionaries get to power, the terror installed among politicians of democratic parties, anti-legionary writers and journalists (for more details see René de Weck, *Journal de guerre. Un diplomate suisse à Bucarest (1939 -1945)*, critical edition done by Simon Roth, foreword by Francis Python, Geneva, SHSR et la Liberté, 2001, first edition

Cioran's articles, where he treats the historical ineffectiveness of Romania, cover only the period between November 1933 - January 1941. The philosopher shares with the Iron Guard the idea of revolution, of dictatorship, of nation, of collectivism and his hate towards Jews and Hungarians. *Transfiguration of Romania* is his manifesto against the liberal regime, in the same time showing his confidence in the spirituality of the Iron Guard. In 1933, Cioran confesses his sympathy for the Nazi regime, for fascism and for Bolshevism. In the letter sent to his colleague of generation, Petre Comarnescu in December 27, 1933, he criticizes his country for its compromises and he considers dictatorship the only chance for his country to get out of its secular darkness. He becomes enthusiastic about the Nazi political order, he supports youngsters' involvement in politics, he sends articles to Romanian reviews, where he very clearly manifests his revolutionary feelings: "*România în fata străinățății*" (*Romania before the Strangers*), "*Impresii din München. Hitler înconștiința Germană*" (*Impressions from Munich. Hitler in the German consciousness*), "*Revolta sătului*" (*The Revolt of the Satiated*). "What did humanity lose if a few idiots are dead?" he wrote in a letter sent from Germany in August 5, 1934. When he returns to Romania, Cioran continues to publish articles in the same style, for example, in the article entitled "*În preajmă dictaturii*" (*In the approach of the Dictatorship*), Cioran shows that the Iron Guard promotes the heroic death, a *desideratum* turned by Cioran into a notorious goal for his philosophical discourses.

The totalitarianism of Cioran becomes even more adamant when he writes about Jews. He wrote two texts on them, the acid one, produced in 1936 (the fourth chapter of *Transfiguration of Romania*) and the laudatory text written in 1956, *Unpeuple de solitaires*, afterwards included in the volume published in French, *La tentation d'exister*. In 1936, Cioran himself was very sure that the Romanian nationalism was based on anti-Semitism and that the Romanians should rebel against the Jews who occupied their positions and were only interested in making fortunes. The Romanian nationalism was imagined by Cioran as a messianic nationalism: it had a twofold purpose, to eliminate the Jews and to make history.

III. A SHORT ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF CIORAN AS REGARDING HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HISTORY: THE FRENCH PERIOD

During the summer of 1947, Cioran decided to put an end to his Romanian experience, from both a political and a linguistic point of view. It took him ten years to fully master the French language. In *Lettre à un ami lointain*, addressed to Noica, his colleague of generation, and included then in *Histoire et Utopie*, Cioran describes his relationship with "this borrowed idiom" as a nightmare, always regretting his country "the smell of freshness and of decay, the mixture of sun and of dung"⁵.

⁵« l'odeur de fraîcheur et de pourriture, le mélange de soleil et de bouse »[6], p. 980

Then he apologizes a lot for his dogmatic past "tolerance cannot seduce the youngsters"⁶. He recognizes that with age, he becomes more tolerant, wiser, which means capable of transforming himself into a "sincere democrat" and into "an uncompromised liberal". Cioran's discourse does not change completely in the West; he still revolts against the "noble character" of his people of origin, against "its excesses of modesty", against its "wisdom" that "surpasses the limits" and he always envies the Hungarians for their "arrogance". However, he does no longer hate his former "oppressors", the Magyars, as he calls them, once arriving in France⁷. Extremely contradictory, as usual, Cioran who stated in *Entretiens* that he would have liked to be anything else besides Romanian and firstly Hungarian, he wrote in *Lettre à un ami lointain* "do not infer from this that I wish to be promoted to the rank of a Magyar. Far from me such a presumption ..."⁸. He will always worship the nations that make history, like the Russian one, who enchants him, and history is not made by means of liberal policies according to him, which are quite "fragile". Moreover "freedoms flourish only in a socially ill body"⁹. According to Cioran, a nation must make history by wars of aggression in order to impose itself. Civilization cannot be acquired when aspiring to wisdom. He condemns the West who "now lives in shame of his conquests", but he is glad to hide himself in France in order to avoid the rigors of communism. Geographically far from communism, Cioran admires the strength of Russia to make history. Nevertheless, all the reflections of Cioran remain at a theoretical level. But he is right when he writes that the separation of Russia from the West occurred from the moment Russia chose Orthodoxy as a religion and "if Russia chose one day a liberal regime, it would be extremely weakened, its force would diminish because of its tiredness"¹⁰. At the same time, prophetic and visionary, Cioran notes that the nations dominated by Russia have not yet had their last word, and that Russia would gradually wither away the day when Poland, Hungary etc. took the decision to redispense of their own destinies.

⁶ « la tolérance ne peut séduire les jeunes » [6], p. 981

⁷ Because he was born in Transylvania, in a family of Romanians, but at the time when Transylvania was under the domination of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Cioran was very familiar with the tyranny practiced by Hungarians towards Romanians. His father, the Archbishop Emilian Cioran, was one of the representatives of the struggle against Hungarians and he was even deported because of it. Moreover, in his *Cahiers*, the French writer Cioran, who is always looking for reasons to justify his juvenile nationalism, believes his father would have been enraged by his predilection for a people who had done so much harm to Romanians. The hate expressed by Cioran in his Romanian writings is motivated not only by the history of his country, but also by his approaching to the Iron Guard, with which, Cioran shares the idea of revolution, of dictatorship, of national collectivism and his resentments towards Jews and Hungarians. Also, Cioran is very influenced by Nae Ionescu, who in his fourth and last conference delivered during his time spent in prison in Miercurea Ciuc, emphasized the relationship between nation, revolution, people and God. The professor recognized that the twentieth century was the century of the expansion of nationalism, a phenomenon triggered by the collapse of the Russian Empire - but also by that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire - and by the pressure exerted by nations, eager to reconstruct their identities.

⁸ « n'inférez pas de là que je souhaite être promu au rang de Magyar. Loin de moi une telle présomption... » [6], p. 985

⁹ « les libertés ne prospèrent que dans un corps social malade » [6], p. 987

¹⁰ « pour que la Russie s'accoutume d'un régime libéral, il faudrait qu'elle s'affaiblisse considérablement, que sa vigueur s'éteigne » [6], p. 998

Neither Romania, nor Bulgaria, or Yugoslavia had contributed to the history of Europe, as they will never contribute to the fall of communism, but all these nations together, stronger or less stronger, will revolt themselves, according to Cioran, against the Russian "ideological map" extended beyond its limits.

Besides his comments on Russia, Cioran also makes positive remarks as regarding Hitler, admiring him for being a tyrant! Cioran considers that tyrants are necessary to run the world and he "always prefer them to prophets and redeemers"¹¹, because "A world without tyrants would be as boring as a zoo without hyenas"¹². A world without tyrants is an ordinary world, but at the same time stable. There is an enormous distance between the Cioran who, in the 1950s, trembled in fear of being deported to Romania, if communism would invade France, and the Cioran who admires the theoretical benefits of communism in *Histoire et Utopie*. Here Cioran declaims that the world needs communism like a sailor who needs a compass: "Communism ... acts, on a virile nation, as a stimulant, it pushes it forward and enables its expansion; on a precarious nation, its influence could be less happy"¹³.

Cioran always had a fantasist relationship with history. He militated for totalitarianism, but when his brother Aurel was imprisoned in 1948 on charges of plotting against the communist regime, he is shocked. It is better to read the stories of Sanda Stolojan, *Au balcon de l'exil roumain* [12], or of Monica Lovinescu, *La apavavilonului*, in order to become familiar with the true Cioran, with the odd personality he had in real life.

In the West, Cioran became interested in French politics "he is very impressed by Doriot, he boasts thus, in a letter sent to Eliade, the "leadership skills" of the founder of the PPF, capable of promoting a genuine "national revolution" which to dynamite democracy. He finds the young French nationalists however dull, timid, old-fashioned, reactionary" [3], remarks Patrice Bollon in his essay *Cioran l'hérétique*. Cioran remains a convinced anti-democrat, but without having the courage of his colleagues of generation, to defend with the price of his life their totalitarian ideas¹⁴.

¹¹ « préfères toujours aux rédempteurs et aux prophètes » [6], p. 1012

¹² « un monde sans tyrans serait aussi ennuyeux qu'un jardin zoologique sans hyènes » [6], p. 1013

¹³ « le communisme... agit, sur une nation virile, comme un stimulant ; il la pousse en avant et en favorise l'expansion ; sur une nation branlante, son influence pourrait être moins heureuse » [6], p. 1044

¹⁴ As different from Cioran, Noica never denied his anti-democratic ideas. He would remain loyal to his totalitarian thoughts, to the astonishment of Cioran. He refused to flee the country or provide details about the Romanian far right and communism, which he was an active witness. His silence regarding these aspects represented a personal solution and an answer to the problems his people confronted with. Another colleague of Cioran's was Mircea Vulcănescu, a precursor of Noica as regarding the fundamentals of a philosophical system centered on the traditional aspects of the Romanian character. Vulcănescu defended to the end his political and philosophical ideas, as well as Noica, refusing the exile in order to save his life. He died in prison at Aiud, where many Romanian intellectuals were also imprisoned, isolated in a cell apart, with some colleagues, stripped naked, without beds, in a terrible cold. According to witnesses, when a friend of him fell exhausted, Vulcănescu rushed to save his life by putting himself directly to the ground and using himself as a mattress. Vulcănescu died on 28 of October 1952, at the age of 48. Meanwhile, Cioran had already begun in the West to deny any relationship with the Iron Guard, by disguising himself into an absolute democrat.

He will be forced to adopt an indifferent attitude in France, sometimes a completely liberal view. After leaving his country, he is no more interested in the history of his people, but he finds the West guilty of having supplied both the ideology of liberalism, but also the one of totalitarianism. Thus, the West exhausted "even if it was of his duty to put communism in practice, to adjust it to its traditions, to humanize it, to liberalize it and then to present it to the world, the West left to the East the privilege to do the impossible and then it took power and prestige of the finest modern illusion (...) and yet the West refuses to draw the ultimate consequences"¹⁵.

In France, Cioran is rather dedicated to his books, largely ignoring his previous activity as a publicist. In the few articles sent to literary reviews, such as the one published in 1972[5] in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, Cioran proved to be still sensitive to the usefulness of revolutions, although this time he emphasized the illogic character of such a historical effort, which would not produce, according to him, but confusion! He remains however on the side of open-minded despotism, which he describes it in *De l'inconvénient d'être né* as "the only regimethat can attract a blazed person, incapable of being an accomplice of revolutions, since he is not even an accomplice of history"¹⁶. Cioran explains why he is actually attracted by tyranny and why, across the globe, man does not object against it, "because precisely one can get a taste for tyranny, because it arrives to man to love a lot kneeling in front of fear, than facing the anxiety of being himself"¹⁷. However, Cioran is wrong, because he will always judge democracy according to Romanian historical and political frameworks, where it failed permanently. Despite his life spent in France, Cioran will always remain under the influence of his readings and of his past. This is why democracy is to him a simple formal guarantee given to the population by some politicians, unable to control in fact History. By copying Spengler, Cioran finds normal the existence of tyranny, that is to say, of a "regenerative barbarism", as it ensures the dynamism of history. And as a faithful pupil of his Romanian professor, Nae Ionescu, Cioran considers that the individual must be subordinated to History (but to him as well as to his professor, the history takes the form of totalitarianism): "History, essentially, is stupid it continues, it advances, because nations are liquidating their prejudices in turn. If they got rid at the same time of their prejudices, there would be more than a happy universal disintegration"¹⁸.

¹⁵ « alors qu'il eut été de son devoir de mettre le communisme en pratique, de l'ajuster à ses traditions, de l'humaniser, de le libéraliser et de le proposer ensuite au monde, il a laissé à l'Orient le privilège de réaliser l'irréalisable et de tirer puissance et prestige de la plus belle illusion moderne (...) et cependant l'Occident refuse d'en tirer les dernières conséquences »[6], p. 988 – 989

¹⁶ « le seul régime qui puisse séduire un esprit revenu de tout, incapable d'être complice des révolutions, puisqu'il ne l'est même pas de l'histoire »[6], p. 1323

¹⁷ « c'est que la tyrannie précisément on peut y prendre goût, car il arrive à l'homme d'aimer mieux croupier dans la peur que d'affronter l'angoisse d'être lui-même »[6], p. 1040

¹⁸ « l'histoire, dans son essence, est stupide Elle continue, elle avance, parce que les nations liquident leurs préjugés à tour de rôle. Si elles s'en débarrassaient en même temps, il n'y aurait plus qu'une bienheureuse désagrégation universelle »[6], p. 1041

Cioran finds hard to separate from his past. In the book written in Romanian between 1941 - 1944 and firstly published under the title *Îndreptar pătimăș*, translated into French late enough, in 1993 as *Bréviaire des vaincus*, he continues to rebel against the insignificant fate of his people. Even if he never demanded the French nationality, always being a prisoner of his Romanian destiny, Cioran hate it, because it attached to him as a disease: "Wherever you go, its curse will pursue you, it will poison your nights, you will be tormented by it"¹⁹.

He still condemns the nations unable to make history, like the Romanian one: "the nations without pride neither live nor die. Their existence is insipid and invalid, because they only bear the naught of their humility"²⁰.

Guilty for the failure of the Romanian history was the interwar liberalism, which exhausted the nation because of the bitter urge of Romanian politicians to enrich themselves. As long as the Romanians refuse to surpass the limits of their humble history²¹ by means of a revolution, which wouldrevoke the "merits" of a corrupted political class, this nation will remain "a simple and honest people [who] does not differ itself from plants"[6]. Cioran once again reiterates the obsession of Spengler to compare people who do not assert themselves in history with the vegetable kingdom!

But Cioran will also be testimony of the decline of Europe anticipated by Spengler. Europe gets tired at the end of the Second World War and it gives up its place to the rivalry between Russia and the United States. Cioran suddenly changes the discourse; it is not only Romania that is unable of political excess, but also the entire Europe, who retires itself into the spectator's position, after having tried for centuries all social and economic injustices.

Starting with 1945, Europe began taking into account the social problems triggered by itself throughout its centuries of territorial expansion. This "wisdom" of Europe is called by Cioran fatigue and cowardice, but he is not very original, as Nietzsche and Spengler had already mentioned before him the decadence of Europe. As Cioran is "allergic" to any manifestation aimed to devitalize a society, he starts criticizing Europe for exactly the same reasons he had once criticized Romania, for too much lucidity and too lack of initiative: "in

¹⁹ « Où que tu ailles, sa malédiction te poursuivra, il empoisonnera tes veilles, tu te tourmenteras pour lui »[6], p. 545

²⁰ « les nations sans orgueil ne vivent ni ne meurent. Leur existence est insipide et nulle, car elles ne dépendent que le néant de leur humilité »[6], p. 553

²¹ But Romania's humble past is conserved by the capacity of the Romanian people to forget the wars, the prisons, in a word the sufferance. Cioran concludes, as regarding the Romanian ability to adapt to all situations: "This is Romania! Anything is possible, nothing has consequences! [12]. At the same time, Cioran refuses to understand the Romanians' passivity proved by accepting Ceaușescu's regime, their inability to rebel against the dictator "who has dishonored Romania, who has transformed the Romanians into primitive beings in the eyes of the others" ([12], p. 230). But at the same time, Cioran, contradictory as usual, began to admire this perverse genius of the Romanians, the only one "who deceived everybody, Westerners, Russians, Africans of the Third World and all the people around him" ([12], p. 83). For Noica, remained in Romania, Ceaușescu represented a necessary evil, with whom he must cooperate to save the Romanian culture. Eugène Ionesco, in exile in Paris in 1977 confided to Monica Lovinescu that he hates the tyrant and he dreams to see him resigning. The infantilism of Cioran and Ionesco largely proves they had no idea of the true terror installed in Romania at the end of the Second World War.

its terrible precaution, Europe refuses to herself, in the name of her previous impertinences and provocations, and to this passion of the inevitable, the final honor of the defeat. Refractory to all forms of excess, in all forms of life, she deliberates, she will always deliberate, even after having ceased to exist: it does not already seem to incarnate the effects of a conclave of ghosts?"²². Once Romania falls into the arms of communism, Cioran only has the option of moving his critique to the West: "A thousand years of wars consolidated the West; a century of *psychology* reduced it to the extreme"²³ or "The West? A *possibility* without future"²⁴.

It is difficult to include Cioran in any category, think it Philippe Tiffreau: "Cioran the Terrible is difficult to be defined, as regarding his writings, are they part of a great cynicism or of a total disinterest? What does motivate Cioran?"²⁵. Another French author, a friend of conversation of Cioran, Roland Jaccard, questioned himself in *Cioranetcompagnie*, on the process used by Cioran in order to achieve a radical detachment, almost Buddhist during his exile. Finally, Cioran displays an attitude of *je-m'en-fichisme* regarding all historical events. He had a special relationship with History, which he regarded through the eyes of a spectator, because his parasitic life permitted him to avoid any obligation and any responsibility towards contemporary events. The world as a theater represented the formula according to which Cioran conceived the universe and his own life: "Whenever he was asked about his profession, Cioran retained himself from not responding: *Swindler in all the forms*"²⁶. In a letter sent to Roland Jaccard on November 25, 1975, Cioran admits he closes himself in an inner exile, "despite its impersonal style, abundant in indirect confessions"²⁷. As time passes, Cioran becomes everything he had used to hate before: lucid and defiant in the infinite possibilities reserved to himself and to man in general; he thinks that any revolt of the individual ultimately turns fatally against himself²⁸.

For Cioran, history is a process which erodes the original dynamism, feeding himself again with the theories of Spengler. Exhausted by his expedition, man wants to go back to prehistoric times, as Cioran notes in *De l'inconvénient d'être né*: "in the depths of himself, man aspires to join the condition that he had before consciousness.

²² « dans sa terrible pondération, l'Europe se refuse à elle-même, au souvenir de ses impertinences et de ses bravades, et jusqu'à cette passion de l'inévitable dernier honneur de la défaite. Réfractaire à toute forme d'excès, à toute forme de vie, elle délibère, elle délibérera toujours, même après avoir cessé d'exister : ne fait-elle pas déjà l'effet d'un conciliabule de spectres? »[6], p. 842

²³ « Mille ans de guerres consolidèrent l'Occident; un siècle de « psychologie » l'a réduit aux abois »[6], p. 769

²⁴ « L'Occident ? Un possible sans lendemain »[6], p. 773

²⁵ « Cioran le Terrible est difficilement cernable, ses écrits font-ils partie d'un grand cynisme ou d'un désintérêt total ? Qu'est-ce qui fait courir Cioran? »[13].

²⁶ « Chaque fois qu'on lui demandait sa profession, Cioran se retenait pour ne pas répondre: Escroc en tout genre »[9].

²⁷ « malgré l'allure impersonnelle, abonde en aveux indirects »[9].

²⁸ We recommend the study of George Bălan, *Emil Cioran : La Lucidité Libératrice?*, foreword, chronological indications, bibliography and notes by Alain Cophignon. Paris, Editions Josette Lyon, 2002, first edition

The history is only a small route he takes in order to achieve it"²⁹. Cioran therefore shares History in two essential moments: pre and post-biblical fall. Faced with the hostility of History that every man is conscious of, Cioran opts out for the inner exile: "being torn to the ground, exiled in time, cut off from its immediate roots, man desires the reintegration in the original sources before the final separation and tear. Nostalgia means just feeling away from you forever"³⁰.

The history of the intellectual elite of the 1930s and its evolution represents a fairly debated topic among researchers from Romania, who after the fall of communism may freely publish their opinions on a period considered until then "delicate".

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS - UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-PD-2011-3-0012.

²⁹ « au plus intime de lui-même, l'homme aspire à rejoindre la condition qu'il avait avant la conscience. L'histoire n'est que le détour qu'il emprunte pour y parvenir »[6], p. 1320

³⁰ « être arraché au sol, exilé dans la durée, coupé de ses racines immédiates, c'est désirer la réintégration dans les sources originelles d'avant la séparation et la déchirure. La nostalgie, c'est justement se sentir éternellement loin de soi »[6], p. 850

REFERENCES

- [1] G. Bălan, *Emil Cioran: La Lucidité Libératrice?*, Lyon, Editions Josette 2002, pp.
- [2] G. Bensoussan, *Histoire de la Shoah*, Paris, Editions Presses universitaires de France, coll. « Que sais-je ? », 1996,
- [3] P. Bollon, *Cioran l'hérétique*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1997, pp. 124
- [4] E. Cioran, "Impresii din Munchen. Hitler înconștiințagermană", in *Vremea*, year VII, nr. 346, Bucharest, 15 July 1934
- [5] E. Cioran, "Sur l'inutilité des révolutions" in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, May and Juin 1972
- [6] E. Cioran, *Oeuvres*, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 545, 553, 554, 769, 773, 842, 850, 980, 981, 985, 987, 988, 989, 998, 1012, 1013, 1044, 1320, 1323, 1040, 1041
- [7] J. Clair, *Les années 1930. La fabrique de « l'Homme nouveau »*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 2008
- [8] C-Z. Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari*, vol. I, Sibiu, Editions Totulpentruțară, 1936, pp. 310
- [9] R. Jaccard, *Cioran et compagnie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2005, pp. 30, 109
- [10] I. Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare, 1918 - 1930*, trad. from English by Vlad Russo, Bucarest, Editions Humanitas, 1998, pp. 77
- [11] Z. Ornea, *Ani treizeci. Extremă dreptăromânească*, Bucharest, Fundația Culturală Română, 1995
- [12] S. Stolojan, *Au balcon de l'exil roumain à Paris*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1999, p. 20
- [13] P. Tiffreau, *Cioran ou la dissection du gouffre*, Paris, Henri Veyrier, 1991, pp. 32
- [14] L. Thomas, *Les raisons de l'antijudaïsme. Les documents contemporains*, Paris, Editions Le Pont, 1942
- [15] F. Veiga, *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919 - 1941, Mistical tranziționalismului*, trad. by Marian Ștefănescu, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1993
- [16] M. Vulcănescu, *De la Naelonescu la Criterion*, Bucarest, Editions Humanitas, 2003