**Cristian Vasile ed. *“Ne trebuie oameni!’’: Elite intelectuale şi transformări istorice în România modern şi contemporană*. Târgovişte: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2017. 442pp.**

Modern Romania has transitioned from feudal principalities to a nation-state, from the Old Kingdom with its limited suffrage to democratic Greater Romania, from a constitutional monarchy to Ion Antonescu’s military dictatorship via the royal dictatorship and the National Legionary State, then into various stages of state socialism and post-socialism. How have intellectual elites shaped the country’s sometimes radical regime changes, and how have individual careers been cut short or redirected by these ‘historical transformations’? The case studies contained in *“Ne trebuie oameni!”* (*“We Need People!”*) follow the changing fortunes of intellectuals, specialists, or ideas through one or more regime changes. While doing so, the book traces the “processes of producing new languages of knowledge” (p. 12), differing approaches to professionalization, and how various regimes define “intellectuals” and “elites.”

Six of the seven case studies are structured around individual or collective biographies. The biographical approach allows the authors to use individuals as a “red thread” that connects seemingly very different regimes together. Tracing individual lives might mean emphasizing continuities rather than ruptures, but what this volume demonstrates is how difficult it was for individuals to negotiate the transition from one regime to another. Most of those who did pursue prominent careers across two regimes frequently only did so by renouncing deeply held beliefs and/or by rejecting their key intellectual contributions from an earlier period. The only non-biographical chapter, by Cristian Vasile, focuses on the fluctuating meanings of “modernity” and “modernization” before and during state socialism. He demonstrates that whereas successive regimes prior to 1944 framed their ambitions in terms of “modernization,” communists of the 1940s and 1950s preferred to speak of “progress” and “development.” Instead of “modernization, the communists wanted an “unconditional spectrum of social progress, facilitating the flowering of the forces of production, science, art, and culture.” (p. 292) “Modernization” reappeared in communist discourse during the mid-1960s, now shaped by influences from American political science.

Ionuţ Biliuţă’s study of four nineteenth century Orthodox clergymen argues that his subjects “formed a direct opposition to the attempts of the state to prevent the unification of the Principalities, thus inaugurating a new form of Orthodox clerical political activism: nationalist opposition to the retrograde conservatism of a state subordinated to the Ottoman and tsarist empires.” (p. 27) As Romanian nationalists, these hierarchs found themselves in conflict with their Greek counterparts, whose ties to Constantinople made them bitter opponents of the planned nation-state. Biliuţă argues that the Romanians were able to reject Caesaropapist arguments about subordination to the Ottoman state thanks to the influence of Western Enlightenment ideas about education, professionalization, and the nation which had already permeated Romanian Orthodox circles. Călin Cotoi’s chapter reiterates the importance of Western influences. Focusing on debates over how to best combat cholera epidemics, Cotoi emphasizes that when Romanian doctors and public health officials battled over the relative merits of quarantine zones or bacteriology, they framed their arguments in terms of modernity and racial degeneration. They did so within a transnational community of specialists, and Cotoi makes the provocative argument that “the establishment of the modern Romanian state is a result, at least in part, of European and Russian worries about epidemics.” (p. 74) Cholera in Romania threatened the health of the rest of Europe, and the survival of elites and institutions in the face of new scientific discoveries and a changing geopolitical situation depended on how well they were able to prevent the spread of disease.

Chapters by Valentin Săndulescu and Camelia Zavarache focus on the interwar period and the transition into a Communist state. As Săndulescu notes, a number of young intellectuals affiliated themselves with the fascist Legion of the Archangel Michael during 1932-33 and tied their careers directly to the movement. Some lost their lives during Carol II’s regime, but the survivors found prestigious jobs under the National Legionary State. Legionary intellectuals used their power to promote their own interests and to persecute their enemies, but when the regime collapsed five months later many were dismissed, imprisoned, or both. Săndulescu demonstrates that some nonetheless survived both Antonescu and state socialism through “radical professionalization,” or by “retreating into a strictly specialized area” where they were “sheltered from public visibility, excessive political influence and, implicitly, the potential for repressive measures.” (p. 173) Surviving state socialism was difficult for intellectuals on the left as well as the right. Zavarache’s study of three left-wing psychologists, Mihai Ralea, Alexandru Roşca, and Mihai Beniuc, before and after the rise of the communism confirms many of Săndulescu’s conclusions about transition. Establishing important research centres in Cluj and Iaşi during the 1930s and then being marginalized for their communist sympathies during the war, all three successfully integrated into the socialist state, but not without significant intellectual compromises, suspicion, and denunciations.

Anca Şincan’s analysis of the corruption trial of Gheorghe Nenciu, the director of the Department of Cults, in 1977 shows that even people who appeared to be “perfect” communists still carried pre-war baggage. Şincan argues that Nenciu was purged for cultivating behaviors that had been characteristic of church officials *prior* to the rise of communism and which had never properly been eradicated. The regime’s desperate need for specialists had allowed people with questionable pasts to survive and it was not until 1977 that the Party was independent enough to purge them. Finally, Narcis Tulbure sheds light on the scandalous manipulation of economic statistics in 2014 by explaining how communist approaches to statistical data were diametrically opposed to the ways Western economists used it. Whereas in the West statistics formed the basis of economic planning, under state socialism they were a state secret and a way for specialists “to negotiate power relations” by using them “as practical manifestations of the limits of legibility and opacity.” (p. 375) Collectively, these chapters challenge us to rethink our assumptions about how interconnected Romania’s past actually was.

*Roland Clark*

*University of Liverpool*