

Towards a critical theory of postcommunism?

Beyond anticommunism in Romania

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In Eastern Europe, 1989–2009 has been a time of fundamental changes in the meaning of social and political concepts, accompanied at different speeds by the radical transformation of society. I consider *transition* the fundamental thematic concept of this historical shift, its operative terms being *integration* and *accession*. Of course, transition had been also the fundamental concept of East European regimes before 1989, then defined as the gradual passage from feudal agrarian societies to socialism, on the way to communism.¹ Transition used to be the total idea that subjected debates, theories and statistics in state-socialist countries, with rhythms punctuated in the daily life by party congresses, quintennial and yearly plans, as well as organized waiting times for the acquisition of apartments and consumer goods. In the framework of dialectical materialism, the strategic aspects of transition had been stated in Chapter 22 (from capitalism to socialism) and the long-anticipated Chapter 40 (from socialism to communism) of *Polecon*, the cult textbook of *Political Economy* published for the first time in 1954 by the Institute of Economy of the Soviet Union. However, in the political expressions of actually existing socialism, the main subject of transition had not been the (socialist) world, but the national state.

Postcommunism has reaffirmed transition, but in a completely different framework of meaning. While the end of the transition to communism was an open-ended idea, an actual fantasy, the meaning of the end of post-communist transition is delineated through closures, and by a determined fantasy: technocratic pragmatism eradicating the role of ideology in politics. The end of state-communism did not bring the radical opening of the Iron Curtain. Rather, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the domino-like series of 1989 revolutions naturalized the sense of the end of a world previously defined by division, and now imagined as progressing, from West to East, towards self-transparency.

At the level of the governmental organization of power, the postcommunist transition is also of the order of closure: the progressive integration of the former Eastern Bloc into Western structures of power.² The political meaning of transition/integration/accession is therefore the top-to-bottom alignment of East European governmentality in the order of Western governmentality, and of local economies into the world system of capitalism. As an integration of the former Second World into the global periphery or semi-periphery, this alignment comes out of sync with the Free World: the postcommunist *durée* of transition is inseparable from the generalization of an allochronic regime of perception that converts space into time, to the effect of undermining local histories of autonomy. Due to the ‘deviation of communism’ from the progressive order of Western modernity, the local Eastern time is ontologically in delay from the Western hour and there is no alternative but to try and catch up with the standards of development, accepting the necessary sacrifices of the population. The post-communist transition develops its system of closures by way of a series of temporal distinctions that frame its differential space, providing the significations of what has been called postcommunist history: from past to future, from behind the Iron Curtain to the Free World, from communism to capitalism, from totalitarianism to democracy, from tyranny to freedom, from madness to normalcy, from backwardness to civilization, from East to West.

In spite of their difference, both transitions, pre- and post-1989, be it under the ideology of *Polecon* or that of ‘shock therapy’ and ‘structural reforms’, channelled their promises through the vision of an elite (political or technocratic) that leads the population, in spite of sacrifices, towards the fulfilment of modernity. Both transitions gave a central role to technocratism and to apparatuses that are delegitimizing leftist criti-

cal thought, emancipative reason and the possibility of political change by claiming the sovereignty of the people. In the conditions in which the dominant phenomena of transition have been global capitalism and colonization, the postcommunist mainstream culture industry has lacked any critical assessment of capitalism or of the coloniality of power for two decades (nonetheless, a different picture appears on the independent scenes). The ‘non-existence’ of capitalocentrism and Eurocentrism could have never been blown to such ideological proportions without the establishment of anticommunism. This is why the recent debates on the genealogy of postcommunism in Romania are important on a larger scale, and even more so in times of crisis, because what is at stake is the struggle to hold in place communism as a critique of capitalism, and an assessment of ‘actually existing socialism’. For what point is there in a discussion about East European debates on communism if not to look there for a renewal of the left theoretical tradition?

The anticommunist establishment

The first decade after 1989 recorded the most dramatic decline of the Romanian economy in its history and an equally unprecedented explosion of printed publications. The discourse of transition/integration replicating Western models passed seamlessly from the practices of mass media, whose freedom and ‘professional development’ were generally seen as ‘preconditions of democracy’, to the whole society itself. Unsurprisingly, a significant number of works that appeared in the early 1990s pondered on the end of actually existing socialism and/or communism. One recurring formula was the ‘bankruptcy of communism’, itself a syntagm articulated from the perspective of profit. Even leftist thinkers adopted a similar formula, the ‘failure of the Left’. The most visible moment of this movement was the publication in French in 1997 of the *Black Book of Communism*, edited by Stéphane Courtois, an authoritative source that introduced in the scholarly world the canon of a grand narrative identifying communism as a lineage passing from Marx to Lenin, Stalin and the Gulag; the genre of direct comparisons between fascism and communism; and a certain mode of thought in relation to communism that I would like to call ‘tribunal-thought’ – that is, the prosecutorial stance raised to being commanding principle of thought itself, and a mode of generalizing speech-acts in the name of the victim. The market was ready to welcome the book: one year after its publication, this massive book of 846 pages, priced at 189 francs (around €27) sold over 200,000

copies. A year later, twenty-six translations in different languages had been either made or were in process. In Romania, the book was translated and published in 1998 by Humanitas, the publishing house of the postcommunist–anticommunist intellectual elite. As influential as it may have been, the *Black Book of Communism* is but one drop in the ocean of the new local culture industry. Here, the authoritative voices articulating the discourse on communism belonged to a number of former anticommunist dissidents who, after 1989, had successfully converted their symbolic capital into political and/or economic capital.

The great dissidents were perhaps too ready in the early 1990s to pass final judgement on communism and mistook the superpower/empire left standing with the realm of absolute freedom. This is especially the case in Romania, where the intellectual dissidents could not claim a history of organized resistance to totalitarianism. Instead, Gabriel Liiceanu, translator of Heidegger and director of Humanitas from 1990, coined the formula ‘resistance through culture’ to redefine Romanian dissidence. This meant the study of forbidden authors (by communist censorship) in secluded, private, confidential communities. If the whole of society was going downhill, at least a few people were keeping the cultural flag flying high. The Heideggerian theme of falling everydayness and unwavering authenticity comes in almost naturally, as well as Heidegger’s negative position towards praxis and intersubjectivity.

One can argue that since 1989 this line of thought has become a programme that reinstates the validity of the hierarchical distinction between elite and mass culture, and facilitates ideological conversion. Even though the end of communism was often interpreted in the works of dissidents as the ultimate disenchantment (the end of Ideology), the postcommunist culture industries excelled in the fetishistic production of *accursed symbols* linked with communism, left thought, and the common man, and the converse import of works and figures of the *masters of thought* from the right side of the political spectrum, a cultural tradition forbidden and censored by communism. In the cultural history of postcommunism, anticommunist dissidence cannot be associated anymore with a history of resistance, neither with forms of independent culture, but rather with cohabitation with and/or direct participation in governmental and capitalist power, and with the local colonization of dominant ideologies, including the political ideologies of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. As of recent times, this is no secret either: in a glowing eulogy to neoconservative figure Irving

Kristol, Vladimir Tismăneanu openly acknowledged that 'I owe and we owe to the neoconservatives the unmasked image of communist totalitarianism.'³

Such transparent statements appeared only with the institutionalization of anticommunism. Even though anticommunism has been from the early 1990s a word of order of the postcommunist public sphere, the actual race to rewrite history and establish the symbolic fate of communism took a fresh as the general elections of 2004 were won by the 'democratic', anti-communist alliance Truth and Justice, which was to embrace an aggressive neoliberal and neoconservative agenda. The incumbent regime established the Institute of the Romanian Revolution from 1989 by Law 556 of 7 December 2004, barely before the inauguration of new President Traian Băsescu on 20 December 2004. The new political powers followed suit, establishing first at the end of 2005, by way of governmental order, the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (IICC), then setting up in April 2006 the Presidential Committee for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (CPADCR). In spite of this apparent rush to set up institutions, the epistemic field was not exactly empty, as the problem of the crimes of communism had also been the object of the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, under the aegis of the Romanian Academy; the Foundation Memoria, under the aegis of the Writers' Union; the Romanian Institute for Recent History; the Committee for the Representation of the Victims of Communism; the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives; the Association of Political Prisoners, and many others. However, IICC and CPADCR were the respective brainchildren of the presidency and the government, now in direct competition for the symbolic heritage of anticommunism. The common purpose of these institutions was to bring the academic evidence necessary finally to answer the appeal made by Stéphane Courtois in 1997: to hold the 'trial of communism' (*procesul comunismului*), analogous to the Nuremberg Trials, whose finality was already announced as the final 'condemnation of communism' (*condamnarea comunismului*). In other words, to be done once and for all with communism as a political idea, to identify with rigour the crimes of communism, and to make possible the 'de-communization' (coined after denazification) of Romanian society, the 'hygienization' of political life by way of 'lustration' – that is, the elimination of former communist cadres from public life.

In this context, the newly elected president appointed the political scientist Vladimir Tismăneanu to head a

Presidential Committee meant to bring together the local elite of anticommunist intellectuals and former dissidents in order to pronounce the final word on communism.⁴ The Committee completed its work in a remarkably short time, publishing on 18 December 2006 the now famous document entitled *Final Report*. The *Final Report* in hand, President Traian Băsescu then pronounced the official 'condemnation' of the communist regime before the general assembly of the Romanian parliament.

The Final Report is a highly heterogeneous, unbalanced and at times contradictory document, but carries a very clear final judgement: 'the communist regime of Romania was illegitimate and criminal.' Other statements asserted that 'at the beginning of 1939, Romania was leaving a relatively happy period of its history which lasted only twenty years', and 'the Romanian state was confiscated for four decades and a half by a political group foreign to the interests and aspirations of the Romanian people.'⁵ The philosophical-historical thesis of the *Report* is that the communist regime was forcefully imposed on Romanians by the Soviet Union, and it was destined to fail as it carried from the beginning the seeds of its own destruction: communism was a pathological abomination, 'an aberrant political beast'.⁶ The problem with communism is therefore not its exacerbated nationalism, nor the coloniality of power, but the fact that it was the wrong colonialism, coming from the 'savage East', and not from the civilized West (which had provided the German monarchic family that ruled Romania in the 'happy' pre-communist age). If in his own book, *Stalinism for all Seasons*, Vladimir Tismăneanu argued that the history of the Romanian Communist Party is one of personalist dictatorship based on nationalist ideology, combined with residual and even perfunctory elements of Marxism,⁷ *The Final Report* shifts to a much harder line, condemning in broad strokes the 'communist ideology', 'Marxist conception', and 'Marxist-Leninist dogmas', for having been 'the pendant of terror'.⁸ None of these concepts is defined or analysed. Communism in general and the Romanian Communist Party in particular are blamed for genocide, but the concept is very loosely defined (by assuming the intentionality of crime) and sometimes even used metaphorically – recalling the unfortunate way it was used in the trial of Ceaușescu. To make things worse, a round number of the victims of communism is produced by way of an amateurish calculus that raised the anger of some of the most sympathetic commentators.⁹ The *Report* produces thus a perspective on communism as if from the point of view of the national state, whose

essence appears to have been temporarily corrupted by 'foreign' interests, a state which is now returning to its objective true values, articulated by way of an allochronic programme of restoration.

The *Report* carries another significant message. Although it tends to overemphasize the role of intellectuals, it also confirms, rather inadvertently, that dissident intellectuals did not provide organized resistance against communism and generally have not been interested in phenomena of resistance coming from lesser social strata.¹⁰ In contrast to the insistence on the fate of intellectuals under communism, there is an obvious dissymmetry regarding the life of workers. In spite of this consistent bias, one is able to discover, however, that there has been a rather consistent history of resistance related directly to workers: the coal miners' strike in Valea Jiului in 1977, the movement of the Free Workers Union of 1979, the powerful workers' strikes of 1980–81 and 1983, then again in 1986–87, culminating with the great workers' rebellion in Braşov, on 15 November 1987. One should also add here that, following official reports, the main revolutionary force in December 1989 was constituted by workers. Thus, from the massive labour force of the eight factories of Timișoara and the large heavy-industry plants IMGB Bucharest and CUG Cluj, to smaller industrial factories such as Metalotehnica Târgu Mureș, the Mechanical Factory in Cugir and even the Carpet Factory in the small city of Cisnădie – the cities where there were victims and where the political and military leadership was pushed beyond legitimacy have all been centres in which the workers took to the streets.¹¹ In spite of such evidence, the authors of the *Report* clearly state that the workers' protests 'had no political content',¹² pursuing thus what has been an essential element of postcommunist cultural politics: the elimination from the public sphere of the worker in particular and of the common man in general. During transition, the decisive moments of the reaffirmation of this strategic alliance and the cultural production of inferior classes as forms of non-existence were the series of *mineriads*, notably the coal miners' violent invasion of Bucharest in September 1991.¹³

The Final Report is a document focused on past realities, but one that extends by definition past its own textual object, justifying a number of interventions in the Romanian public sphere. The existence of the *Report* itself is justified by way of alluding to the fact that communism did not really die with Ceaușescu in 1989, but survived apparently in the form of covert structures and pathologically corrupt people who are to blame for the delay and mishaps of postcommunist

transition.¹⁴ The authors of the *Report* point to an equally troubling sign from the present: the observation that the popular masses do not seem to pay heed to the postcommunist work of the cultural elite, harbouring instead positive feelings and nostalgia for the communist past. The Final Report ends with a set of forward-looking gestures, proposing an interdiction on the public display of communist symbols, a ban on publishing communist propaganda materials (except in 'an educative anti-totalitarian context'), and, most worryingly, the publication of a list of names, apparently ready for 'lustration' purposes. In the subsequent media avalanche of interviews, articles and television appearances, the broad brushstrokes regarding the ideology of communism have become even broader, devoid of footnoted restrictions: several authors and promoters of the *Report* made it clear that the grand philosophical implication of this work and of the presidential 'condemnation of communism' is the elimination of the left altogether from the political spectrum. An informal but no less systematic system of censorship takes shape by way of essentialization, cultural production in the form of detestable symbols, and the generalization of metonymic reason. Any present-day leftist thought – including Žižek and Badiou, as Tismăneanu himself repeatedly mentioned – should be seen as a surviving derivation of communism; at best, leftist thought is 'anachronistic' and 'irresponsible', at worst it carries the seeds of criminality.¹⁵ Moreover, the communist past is to blame even for the corruption, poverty and crimes of present-day capitalism, namely for the failure to develop a 'civilized capitalism' during transition.¹⁶ As a general phenomenon, beyond the actual content of the text of the *Report*, the performance of the condemnation of communism assumed the function of delegitimizing and limiting the possibilities of critical thinking. Freud's note that 'condemnation is the intellectual substitute of denial' certainly applies here fully. It needs only the qualification in this context: at stake is the denial of the modernity of communism.

New critical spaces

The Final Report may represent the quintessence of the anticommunist establishment, but it failed to produce the desired final word on communism, and to bring communism before the law. However, the *Report* as a general phenomenon (i.e. considering the text together with the performance of its promoters in the culture industry and formal political sphere) arguably succeeded in further disseminating anticommunism as the proto-political principle of the post-1989 public sphere. One can also argue that the *Report* contributed to the

propagation of tribunal-thought as a generalized mode of thinking and speaking in the name of the victim. Through the trial of communism, tribunal-thought postulates nothing less than a universal 'right by nature' to defend 'an objective moral order'.¹⁷ The anticommunist dissidents embody this moral order, which then enables the legitimization of intolerance.

The Final Report was contested and criticized in the local cultural sphere from multiple angles, both with regard to its internal inconsistencies and in relation to the external factors that made it possible: compliance with the existent frameworks of power; a critique of state totalitarianism produced at the request of the supreme authority of the state; and a conjectural effect of the internal competition between two ruling parties. Recently, three important collective publications have addressed critically the problems of communism and postcommunism in Romania: *The Anticommunist Illusion*, *Genealogies of Postcommunism* and *The Televised Romanian Revolution*.¹⁸

The Anticommunist Illusion puts together critical receptions of the *Report*, opening up indirectly the problem of thinking critically the communist past. The history of this book's publication is itself significant. Major Romanian publishing houses simply refused to take on the book, which appeared eventually under the imprint of Cartier, a publishing house from across the Eastern border, in the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, the book was subject to attack even before its publication. In this sense, *The Final Report* had a positive effect: the diffuse, informal censorship of critical thought that characterized the cultural history of transition has become visible and explicit. The condemnation of communism was countered thus by a collective movement, which made the passage from writing a critique of the *Report* to creating the context in which it was possible to articulate such a critique. What emerged out of this heterogeneous set of critiques was that recent anticommunism has not been a discourse of emancipation and resistance, but the dominant discourse of transition and an instrument of power. The idea that anticommunism is a universal 'moral obligation' was an ideological principle put in the service of a particular group of interests.¹⁹ *The Final Report* is not an act of reconciliation, or even clarification, but is the tentative official establishment of a diffuse dominant ideology, and an attempt to rewrite national history. Since the book's contributors belong to very different academic backgrounds and political orientations, the chapters bring striking evidence of the formation of a monolithic interpretation of past history that has come to dominate the present.

While Adrian-Paul Iliescu argues that the 'missionaries of anticommunism' are attacking in the name of freedom the liberal principle of plurality in thought, Andrei State documents the conflation of affirmation and analysis, and the fact that the communist period is considered altogether irrational, a demarcation which makes possible the denial of communism as a factor of modernization, and the profiling of monological reason. The *Report's* principle of enunciation is 'nothing bad about pre-communist Romania, nothing good about communist Romania.'²⁰ Alex Cistelean and Ciprian Șiualea both argue that the failures of the *Report* only emphasize the relation between the poverty of the dominant thinking on communism and the emptiness of the anticommunist vision of present and future – a technocratic republic taken care of by an elite of experts, draped as a Leo Strauss-inspired Platonic city of wisdom and science.

If *The Anticommunist Illusion* makes clear the contemporary necessity to reflect on the experience of communism, *Genealogies of Postcommunism* (2009), offers a timely assemblage of texts on the modernity of communism and its heritage, with contributions spanning philosophy, the visual arts, and the social theory of urban space and economy. *Genealogies of Postcommunism* emerged initially also as a reaction, albeit to a provocation coming from the curators of *Documenta 12*: 'Is modernity our antiquity?' The leitmotif of *Documenta 12* resonated with the problem of the posterity of communism, which had been a constant theoretical preoccupation of the journal *IDEA arts + society*. The red thread of most contributions to *Genealogies* is the attempt, first, to find the conceptual means to grasp the relations between the experience of actually existing socialism and Western modernity, and, second, to identify the meanings of postcommunism. Against the main tenet of anticommunism, G.M. Tamás argues that communism has been the main local factor of modernization. State communism followed a road analogous to that of liberal Western modernity, attempting first to purge East European societies from a feudalism that was still dominant between the world wars; during postcommunism, the 'second echelon' of the same Party purged even socialist residues, producing a society built on the pure principles of capital. In short, the shift was from state capitalism to 'capitalism pure and simple.' Aurel Codoban notes that the barriers against the critical thinking of postcommunism are anticommunism, in the sense of the assumption that communism expelled Romania from 'modernity', and the identification between the factual integration of Romania into the European

Union and the epochal moment of 'entering modernity'. He argues that Romanian 'real socialism' belongs to (Western) modernity as a technocentric attempt to dismantle traditional communities, driven by the belief in progress, urbanization and universal literacy. Using different means, 'real socialism' produced the same result as modern capitalism: the mass-cultural society. The main difference is that of cultural materialities: the Cold War was also a war between the model of a mass culture attached to the cold medium of print, and one preferring the hot media of radio and television. Generalizing this similarity, real socialism can be understood as a 'postmodern simulacrum of capitalist modernity': a communitarian lifestyle animated by a gift economy, somehow stitched on an industrial background.

Postcommunism gave up even socialism's productive nostalgia for the principle of community, leaving literally *everything* to the domination of exchange value, completely unattached from any use value. Cornel Ban adopts the formula of 'national Stalinism' to designate Romania's experience, arguing in much the same vein that this was a form of 'modernity' almost in the same measure as it was a form of political and cultural regression. Ban brings a much-needed comparative view between Romania's development and that of capitalist countries like Greece and Portugal that started in 1948 at similar levels of development. While Romanian Stalinism alienated the values of humanist socialism, by sacrificing people, keeping labour subordinated to (state) capital, and enforcing a strictly conservative morality (closer to a Catholic theocracy than to the emancipative spirit of the October Revolution), state interventionism ensured very high levels of efficiency until at least 1974, and the radical and rapid modernization of society through industrialization and urbanization. Ironically, it would appear that 'real socialism' failed to deal with success; apparently there was no need for internal purifications, labour camps and violent repression of workers, or other actualizations of Stalin's tenet on the accentuation of class struggle in the process of development. More intriguingly, the decline seems to coincide with the process of co-optation of intellectuals, who brought into the Communist Party the rhetoric of 'national values', which was preserved in postcommunism, becoming the main principle of anticommunist restoration: the 'objective return to true values'. For my part, I argue that our understanding of communism and its 'posts' depends on the effort to de-essentialize and develop a plural sense of 'modernity'. I plead for the critical task of making connections between reason and emancipation,

the deconstruction of the frame of anticommunism, Eurocentrism and capitalocentrism, and an epistemic turn towards a decolonial understanding of power. This includes revision of the philosophical vocabulary, which has to be adapted to the discursive situation in which one already finds oneself. For instance, the fact that the rhetoric of national values kept its central role beyond the radical change of socio-political paradigms, and the actuality of the narcissism of minor difference and radical Eurocentrism, mean that the critical theory of postcommunism cannot separate the critique of capitalism from critical race theory (or reserve a 'secondary' or 'strategic' role to the latter).

Finally, *The Televised Romanian Revolution* (2009) is a conceptual book that attempts to open a new critical space for reflection on the decisive moment linking communism and postcommunism. The editors consider the 1989 Revolution both as a global event and as the formative moment of the postcommunist culture industry and political sphere, tracing the shift in the meaning of postcommunism from the 'Revolution of 1989' to the 'end of the Cold War'. To consider the Revolution as a media phenomenon is an attempt to situate events in a problematic field (as opposed to a disciplinary frame of meaning), and to offer an alternative to the dominant interpretations of the 'stolen revolution', and of 1989 as the 'end of all revolutions' (and consequent beginning of *direct politics without any mediation*). By looking at materialities of culture – such as the historical coincidence between the political transition of Eastern Europe and the technological transition of satellite and cable television, the televised revolution is situated in a field of immanence that allows a novel grasp on the global and local relations between mass media, capitalism and power.

Thanks to these and to other works, especially from the visual arts, the study of postcommunism has the chance of developing into an original field of critical theory, by necessity archeological and praxical. A guiding principle of the critical theory of postcommunism could be that any theoretical disenchantment is a function of the historical conditions that made it possible.²¹ For instance, the study of postcommunism brings to light a series of coincidences between neoconservative and certain leftist positions: the adoption of formulas such as 'the failure of the Left', the rebuttal of feminism and multiculturalism, disdain for the 'American university Left', a certain view on the decadence of true values, the rejection of analytical Marxism, the monologic discourse on 'modernity', a resistance to plural ontologies and alternative epistemologies, and last but not least, a

devaluation of the role of activism and/or militantism for theory itself. Equally troubling is the emerging opposition between ‘civilized capitalism’ (Western, born out of Protestant ethics), and ‘Balkan capitalism’, and the establishment of purely Eurocentric and intellectualist conceptions of ‘philosophy’.

As the postcommunist horizon of meaning teems with the ‘old’ ideas of solidarity, disenchantment, resistance, liberation and justice, there is a lesson to learn about the relations between liberal and fascist anticommunism, Eurocentrism and the coloniality of power, the geopolitics of knowledge, the closures of transition and the elimination of the worker as a political subject, about capitalism and the public sphere. There is also a lesson to learn about the political uses of transition, messianism and teleology. As opposed to messianic time, transition time is essentially comparative. Transition time can also be defined as *the time that remains between time and its end*, but provides a specific framework in which the category of nation-state population is given epistemic prominence. If comparative philology compares languages without passing through the middle ground of representation, transition time allows the comparison of populations (of actual existing socialist states) without having to pass through any kind of middle ground, which undermines the foundations of socialist politics. My perception is that in the last decades of state communism what surged forward towards ‘postcommunism’ was precisely opposition or resistance to transition time, in the form of various concepts of self-government and autonomy, and of critiques of DiaMat and developmental Marxism. These different movements, not necessarily programmatic, were unfortunately overcoded by state apparatuses, before and after 1989, in the form of ethnic nationalism and consumerist individualism.

What stands out two decades after the fall of the Eastern Bloc is the actuality of communism as horizon of thought: not as an abstract idea, but as an epistemic standpoint that allows the intersection not integration of subjects and discourses. Beyond condemnations, critiques and nostalgia, actually existing socialism seems actually to provide the form of what Derrida once called ‘the experience of the impossible.’ More precisely, as it unfolds its own field of immanence, the study of postcommunism vacillates between the impossibility of pronouncing communism dead and the impossibility of its return.

Notes

1. For a synthetic review of different meanings of transition in the context of the capitalist world system, see Andre Gunder Frank, ‘Transitional Ideological Modes: Feudal-

ism, Capitalism, Socialism’, *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1991.

2. The most visible integrations or accessions can be identified as: Council of Europe (Hungary to Romania 1990–93), NATO (Czech Republic to Romania 1997–2004), European Union (Poland to Romania 2004–07), as well as: the World Bank and the IMF (reinstitution of relations and/or loans as early as 1991 for Poland), the WTO (memberships accorded in 1995), etc.
3. Vladimir Tismăneanu, ‘Despre Neoconservatorism’, <http://tismaneanu.wordpress.com/2009/09/25>.
4. Most dissidents gladly answered the presidential interpellation; Paul Goma notably refused to be part of the Committee.
5. *The Final Report*, CPADCR, pp. 636, 158, 17.
6. *The Final Report*, p. 618.
7. Vladimir Tismăneanu: *Stalinism for all Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003, p.13.
8. *The Final Report*, p. 13.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
10. This phenomenon was also noticed by Dennis Deletant: ‘What was even more striking, perhaps, about the Brasov protests, was the failure of Romanian intellectuals to react to the events. This lack of solidarity between workers and intellectuals characterized the forms of opposition to the Romanian regime and distinguished Romania from Poland and Hungary.’ Dennis Deletant, ‘Romania 1945–1989: Resistance, Protest and Dissent’, in K. McDermott and M. Stibbe, eds, *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe*, Berg, Oxford, 2006, pp. 81–99.
11. *Report on the events of December 1989*, Romanian Service of Informations, SRI, Bucharest, 1994. See Konrad Petrovsky, Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, *Romanian Revolution Televised*, IDEA, Cluj, 2009, pp. 35ff.
12. *The Final Report*, p. 359.
13. However violent the miners’ revolt was, it was a direct result of the newly implemented shock therapy, then supported by anticommunist intellectuals.
14. *The Final Report*, p. 171.
15. Under the new leadership of an important anticommunist author (who, like Vladimir Tismăneanu, was appointed by the president), the Romanian Cultural Institute organized on 20 October 2006 a round table featuring only right-wing intellectuals, and dedicated to solving the following problem: ‘Why are intellectuals still attracted to socialist ideas?’
16. ‘Stomac de oțel’, interview with Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Dilema Veche* 235, 14 August 2008.
17. H.R. Patapievici, *Omul recent*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2001.
18. V. Ernu, C. Rogozanu, C. Șiulea and O. Țichindeleanu, eds, *Iluzia anticomunismului*, Cartier, Chișinău, 2008; Adrian T. Sîrbu and Alexandru Polgar, eds, *Genealogii ale comunismului*, IDEA, Cluj, 2009; Konrad Petrovsky, Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, eds, *Revoluția română televizată. Contribuții la istoria culturală a mediilor*, IDEA, Cluj, 2009.
19. Ciprian Șiulea, in *Iluzia anticomunismului*, p. 241.
20. See Adrian-Paul Iliescu and Andrei State in *Iluzia anticomunismului*, pp. 152–3, 219.
21. Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, ‘Myth and Complicity: The Mysticism of Post-Communist ‘Freedom’ and its Denials’, *Idea arts + society* 20, 2005.