

BOOK REVIEW

Apostolos Patelakis, *Războiul civil din Grecia (1946-1949) și emigranții politici greci în România (1948-1982)*, Târgoviște, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2017.

Apostolos Patelakis was born in Craiova in 1951 from Greek parents (Evangelos and Maria, former combatants in the Greek Civil War , initially settled in the Column of Ștefănești, Argeș County and later relocated to Craiova). Young Apostolos followed and graduated in Craiova, including university studies, then worked as a history teacher in Botiza, Maramures, continuing his studies in Cluj-Napoca.

Apostolos E. Patelakis assumed the task of writing the history of Greek Civil War and Greek political refugees in Romania, making a pioneering work. He gathered data from the archives, the press, all the Romanian and Greek works and the result is a masterpiece.

The author shows that the Greeks have enjoyed good conditions. The children were admitted to schools, trying to ensure the learning of the Greek language. Apparently, Apostolos Patelakis shows that the adults have received jobs, even leadership positions, even if they had problems in learning the Romanian language. The first idea of ideological affinity points out Stalin's duplicity that allowed refugees to be received, but he has set specific tasks for the governments of the Eastern Bloc countries to not allow potential volunteers to join Greek combatants.

The book presents dramatic events, such as the political-military developments in Greece in the years of the Second World War (Chapter I), following as the central element, the Greek Civil War (Chapter II), continuing with the detailed presentation of the fate of the Greek refugees from the establishment in Romania until the repatriation (Chapter III).

At the end of the Second World War, following the imperial interests of the Soviet Union and Great Britain, the two friendly countries in the Balkans will be in rival camps. Romania enters the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, where the communication process will gradually begin, and Greece in the sphere of Anglo-American influence, where it was intended to impose a democratic type of Western regime.

Gradually, Romania was broken off by the West, although the Romanians had no interest for the Communist ideology and they all waited for the arrival of the Americans

to change their fate. In Greece, however, communist ideas were gaining ground without the direct support of the Soviets. At that time, the moral and political force of the Communists was immense, enjoying great sympathy among a large part of the population. Strong social tensions, lack of confidence and political antagonism between political parties would eventually lead to the outbreak of civil war in 1946. The two camps that will face the next three years were very well outlined: on one hand, the governmental, pro-monarchist forces, and on the other hand, the communist forces, which at that time had control over the whole country.

Due to the international conjuncture, after the Second World War Greece and Romania followed a special route, being in opposing political-military blocks. Greece was the only country in Europe where, after the expulsion of the German occupiers (October 1944), peace did not reign, and the people could not enjoy the brilliant victory against Hitlerism. Instead of starting the reconstruction process of the country, as in the rest of the states, the devastating civil war (1946-1949) erupts, which further complicated the situation in Greece and the Balkans.

After the end of the Civil War, thousands of Democratic Army fighters along with their military and political leaders, as well as thousands of civilians, fled to the socialist states, demanding political asylum. Of the nearly 80,000 refugees, around 11,500 people found shelter in hospitable Romania, where they had access to all the economic and social-cultural values of the Romanian society.

For those who came to Romania's hospitable land, fate was better. It was a country that did not differ greatly from Greece, it was quite close: there were Greek communities, they were bilingual, of the same religion, and the Romanians sympathized with the Greeks. But this sudden rupture of the motherland has left a deep impact in most of the people, especially the elders, for their whole life. The Greek Communist Party, in collaboration with the Romanian authorities, made special efforts in the early years to solve the great problems faced by thousands of people scattered in different cities of Romania, but generally remained with interests strained to Athens and the other to Moscow.

In the early years, Greek emigrants have gone through rather heavy emotional burdens. They lacked relatives, friends, geographic space in which they grew up and formed. The rupture of the country was very painful, but they managed to keep in their heart a part of Greece. They have always lived with the hope that one day they will return to the dear home. Over time, emigrants have adapted very well, understanding the spirit of the place, the fact that they have to respect the traditions of the Romanians and, at the same time, to keep theirs. They created associations in which they had a cultural activity, the children were learning Greek at school, and they were working together with the Romanians to build socialism.

The Greek emigrants enjoyed respect from the Romanians, with whom they had close friendship. All former emigrants recognize and appreciate the help received from the Romanian people throughout their staying in Romania.

The author mentions that Greek political refugees have carried out a number of cultural activities, have set up a publishing house, a printing house, a radio station. The

book also presents the events that made part of the Communist Greek Communist archive out of Romania, it relates to internal struggles aimed at ensuring the political control of the Greek Communist Party by one or other of the pro-Moscow and pro-European camps.

Professor Apostolos Patelakis considered it necessary to mirror both the internal political life of Greece and Romania and the influence of political events on the bilateral relations between Romania and Greece. The evolution of the relations between the two factions within the Greek Communist Party is also presented.

The book also shows the particularly difficult way in which, after authorizing repatriation, many Greek refugees and their families had to integrate in Greece, a country integrated in 1981 in the European Economic Community and with a different economic and political system.

Pălășanu Angelia

Timothy Snyder, *Despre tiranie: Douăzeci de lecții ale secolului XX*, București, Editura Trei, 2018.

Addressing totalitarianism is never an easy task, as it guides us to one of history's most excruciating realities. There is a broad literature, both scientific and fictional, that encapsulates the tyrannic episodes of the 20th century, and one of the main interpreters of political extremism is undoubtedly Timothy D. Snyder. Author of works such as *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* and *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, Snyder is a Professor of History at Yale University and a permanent fellow at the Institute of Human Sciences in Vienna. He received a PhD from the University of Oxford in 1997 and his academic interests focus on modern Central and Eastern Europe and totalitarian regimes.

On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century represents the latest book published by the American author, having been recently edited in Romanian translation. His work can be seen as a synthetic attempt to explain the greatest sins of the XXth century in the form of a sententious essay.

Snyder has divided the book into 20 small-size chapters, adding also a prologue and an epilogue in order to shape and conclude his ideas. During the course of 174 pages we discover, on one side, the realities, the dramas and more importantly, the causes that have led to the rise of radical political parties during the 1930's. On the other side, the author is constantly trying to draw some parallels with today's socio-political narratives, in the pursuit of determining mass-awareness on the recent historical lessons.

The book is written in a mere popular fashion, definitely meant for the vulgarization of scientific knowledge, in order to reach a broad spectrum of readers and to maximize the impact and the importance of his goals. I would include Snyder's essay in a more or less recent editorial trend, alongside works such as Jordan Peterson's *12 rules for life* – which try to express profound and vast phenomena using a comprehensible pedagogical scheme. Throughout the pages, we can observe metaphorical phrases or stories written in an emotional manner – take for example the David Lodge reference in chapter three or the Teresa Prekerowa mention in the 8th chapter –, which try to offer the reader a much more understandable context of the totalitarian episodes.

Recent political events have influenced the author into developing *On Tyranny*, as he constantly addresses the tumultuous narrative that has unfolded in the last couple of years between democracy and populism, between the U.S.A. and Russia or between other opposing ideological sides. Snyder sees the Russian oligarchy that has risen after the

collapse of the U.S.S.R. as dangerous as the Nazis or the C.P.S.U., which at first glance may seem as a bald statement, but his goal is to emphasize the possible harmfulness of democracy as simulacrum.

Probably the most captivating aspect of the book is the fact that it is gradually evolving into an obvious manifesto against the sitting president of the United States. By implying that the 2016 presidential election might just as well be another „1933 – as it was for Germany”, another „1946 – as it was for Czechoslovakia” or another „1990 – as it was for Russia”, the author aims to illuminate the public on the vulnerability of today’s American democracy. For that reason and also taking into consideration the start of the 19th chapter, we may say that the book is meant for the American reader. Surprisingly, even though he uses historical events and figures (such as Hannah Arendt, Leszek Kolakowski, Victor Klemperer, Vaclav Havel and so on) as an example in order to build his thesis, we observe no mention on the 1917 Russian Revolution events.

The anti-Trump rethoric hits a paroxysmal level in the last but one chapter, even though he does not mention the president’s name not even once throughout the book. Snyder offers different negative examples on Trump’s actions and declarations which should hint us the possibility of an escalating authoritarian regime in the United States. He also evokes that the American electoral system and American democracy lacks in various ways, leaving it exposed in the battle against illiberal movements.

To the end of the book, the author makes a couple of interesting points, especially when he gives an explanation on how and why the American political system has failed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The U.S.A. had been charmed at that time by the neo-hegelian ideal proposed by Francis Fukuyama (even though Snyder doesn’t mention this specific political scientist) on „the end of history”. Historicism trapped American politics into a bubble of undisturbed peacefulness, which is, in Snyder’s view, the main theoretical cause of the rise of populism.

As a conclusion, it is necessary to mention the fact that the book lacks some methodological aspects, neglecting important details when presenting the concept of „extremism”. It might as well be seen as a product of „whisful thinking”, mainly because it addresses future realities by predicting them with no scientific background nor instruments – the book itself being categorised outside scientific literature. In spite of all this, studying Snyder’s work is important in order to understand the evolution of totalitarian or authoritarian thinking. The theological structure of the book makes it accesible for a casual reader to enter the world of political theory and that is why *On Tyranny* can be a significant vector in shaping an individual’s behaviour and reasoning when it comes to future civic engagement.

Cosmin Sipoș