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Incarceration experience in Romanian prisons. Psychological significance

– PhD thesis –

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Summary

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We started this transdisciplinary research trying to find answers to philosophical significance of a one historical period and meaning of this history still insufficient decrypted by the archeology of knowledge. Period covered is concentrated in the years 1949-1954, and includes the time in Romanian history which is known in scientific literature as the „Pitesti phenomenon”, so it is a significant part of the phenomenon of incarceration in our country. Shaping and structuring of this phenomenon through various disciplinary perspectives, namely the hermeneutic and psychological, can only help us to understand in depth the „experiment” applied in Pitesti prison, and its implications in terms of Reality. I did not even go so far as to consider, along with Alin Mureșan, one of the few historians concerned in recent years in the history of violence within the communist prisons in Romania, that „Pitesti experiment” would be „the very essence of communism”. What happened in Pitesti, in our interpretation, it has nothing to do with the essence of any communist or communist ideology.

The aim of our research was, on the one hand, to understand how ideology of reeducation produces a shift in the traditional view of human sciences, facilitated by emerging experimentalism of Soviet science. These sciences have tried to produce a shift in the way in which this man it is self-constructed on a ideological perspective, specifically the Soviet ideology, starting from the imperfections of human contingency. Ideology of reeducation was founded on the idea that man is a being theoretically imperfect, and through psychic sciences he can produce a philosophy of life to break away from his past, characterized by a lack of intrinsic perfection. This theory was based in the context of experimentalist atmosphere of scientific disciplines entourage, and also its contagion to the occult. On the other hand, we wanted to highlight the psychological mechanisms of operation and implementation of this ideological reeducation in prisons, starting with Pavlovian experiments of the ‘20s and ‘30s of the last century, years in which the Soviet science was interested in inducing pathological conditions to humans through by disturbing the higher nervous processes.

The faithful reconstruction of the model and historicity of reeducation was not a

priority in the present research, which is why we chose the interpretation of this model by way of the anomalies that it has generated in the penitentiary institution, the interpretation of the scientific causes that led to these pathological situations and the effect of these anomalies on the human being. We thus propose to show that, although programmatic, she aspired to pseudo-scientific status, or scientific, throughout the anomalies that resulted in prison space, ideological reeducation proves to be an act of forcing from Soviet science and also an empirical imposture. This paper is not one that investigates the physiology of pain. We do not make an inventory of torture and no hierarchy of cruelty. Geography of mutilated body belongs to other disciplines, namely medical, and we do not need to substitute the posture of general practitioner to introduce the bestiary of possible injuries caused by the instrumentation of punitive methods.

In the first chapter, „Ideology of reeducation”, we defined several features of experimentalism typology that animated the ambition of Soviet scientists after the 1917 revolution, scientists who, in order to fit ideology theories have resorted to acts of imposture, the falsification of results in their field of science. Ideology of reeducation appears to be a result of this utopian atmosphere that has demonstrated ultimately its inefficiency, because the entire doctrinal and experimental design around her started on false premises. We chose to address this area of scientific experimentalism predominantly from the perspective of social and psychological sciences, because they give us a deeper picture of how ideology succeeds, or ideological leap in science, to impose its will on the territory of these empirical disciplines.

Soteriological self-construction of man takes place also in our country at a time in our history. Place and time: Pitesti, 1949-1952. This has been one of the most brutal forms of reeducation in the history of ideological reeducation, even more impressive than the Chinese or Soviet reeducation. The forms that embarked this reeducation still remains an unexplained mystery in the researches from our area, and especially the causes that led to this form of aggressive and traumatic reeducation. There are still interpretations favoring false tracks concerning the origin of this reeducation action, or interpretations that bring everything to a single man, Eugen Țurcanu. This reconstruction of ideological reeducation phenomenon starts also from the hermeneutical research of triad *enemy to the people–bandit–reeducated*, which was actually been at the ideological foundation of this reeducation actions, and which was influenced by another important concept of the Soviet era, *the new man*.

Related to this experimentalist atmosphere, the case of the Russian physiologist Ivan Petrovich Pavlov is more than interesting in terms of ideological reeducation. In last years of his life he took a personal interest, in a series of experiments in which he tried to affect the balance of nerve processes by the induction a state of „chronic experimental

neurosis”, which had just this sole purpose: pathological damage of the nervous system. His researches, which later were found in psychiatry, led to the vision of „plasticity” of the human being, and the idea that it man can be transformed simply by handling the mental processes of inhibition and excitation. The consequences of these experimentalist researches were found later in the reformer paradigm of ideological reeducation, where the complex processes of transformation of man have been implemented.

In the second chapter, „Ideological reeducation”, We began by presenting two models of ideological reeducation applied in prisons from China and Yugoslavia, thus trying to draw a parallel between the two moments of reeducation happened in a similar period to that Romanian, under the coordination of Soviet advisers deployed in this three countries, after then proposing a hermeneutic analysis of these methods of reeducation through the readings of experiments regarding the induction of Pavlovian chronic experimental neurosis. We then reconstituted the magnitude violence phenomena in incarceration zone, with its methodological specificities, some of which differ radically from the Chinese type of ideological reeducation. We then present a psychological profile of the Reeducator in prisons of Romania during the years of 1949-1951, embodied in the person of Eugene Țurcanu, to emphasize this way the different perception among victims and aggressors upon the Reeducator actions.

In the third chapter, „The deconstruction of ideological reeducation”, are taken into discussion a number of abnormalities that are found in phenomenology of ideological reeducation from Pitesti prison, arising from the very practical approach to reeducation philosophy as the premise to transforming human personality, what proves to be a very odd perspective on the human capacity to convert. This perspective is strange not because it would generate anomalies, but because it establishes a new ethical relationship between people, whereas ideological reeducation approaches states the idea that human nature is *fundamentally evil and perverted*. Unlike Pavlovian experiment, which succeeded in inducing a pathological state by destroying the nervous equilibrium, using either pharmacological substances or the disruption of inhibition and excitation processes, the reeducation from Pitesti (as in the Chinese, by the way), was started on the principle premises that those subject to thought reform are already is in a state of abnormality. And also they past makes them very dangerous for others, namely, that they are somehow in the posture of a *ideological patient* following to be medically treated via surgical instruments and methods of re-educators assigned to this operation. This approach comes up with more clues and some features, but all are centered on the idea mainly sanitary: ideological prisoner is an ill who does not know that he is ill and he is about to discover this in the worst way possible.

Through ideological reeducation prison, was followed more than mere indoctrination,

or so-called inevitable appearance of the „new man”. Methodology and the inner mechanism of this re-education through its observed psychological consequences, lead to an pathologizing intentionality, than to a positive intentionality, such as curative, therapeutic, medical, and last but not least, educational. At all levels of its processes and phased functionality, ideological reeducation is a tool that serves only one purpose: trauma victims. Ideological content that overlaps the pathological rehabilitation is also pointless, since once the victim is out of the reeducation environment she regains her inner balance and readjust to the previous reality, to the world from which has been torn to apply on him a methodology of transforming personality and character. This action of reeducation with pathologizing intentionality comes in direct continuity with the experience started in the ‘20s, and continued until his death, by Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. At that time, the famous physiologist founded the experimentalist base of psychic transformation through a series of experiences that were just meant to affect the balance of the nervous system. Its declared intention in several studies and conferences has been to discover new ways of pathological affecting of mental processes, and inducing a pathological condition. He was concerned with the induction of neurotic and psychotic states, but the vast majority of his experience has been focused on the induction of „chronic experimental neurosis”.

At Pitești Penitentiary and later at the Gherla, or at Balta Albă camp, this ideological reeducation had the same goal of trauma victims. Applied torture, not only the physical but also mentally, was intended to induce a pathological state, a state in which they repressed their own system of values and beliefs, and embraced a different system of values, quite the opposite of the previous one. This new system of values, this new ethical order appeared as a change of character, an anticathexis which, as noted the American psychologist, Robert Jay Lifton, was intended to lead to an emerging „negative identity” of the victims. This stands out especially by the preponderance of the reeducation methods, „inner unmasking” and „outer unmasking”, aid by the use of physical and psychological torture, tried to develop negative character traits, that trended towards depreciation own self image. But these negative traits, even if they were temporarily assimilated by the victims – as was the case in ideological reeducation Chinese –, they were not integrated into the whole new pathological personalities. Once released, most victims have regained its old identity, or rather, once out of the pathologizing action of ideological reeducation, they were cured of their pathological condition which was experimentally induced to them.

Ideological reeducation through anomalies that generated in penitentiary institutions was truly a moment of imposture, on imposture of one a experimentalist science field, that is, psychology. This imposture is even more violent and more pronounced compared to other impostures of the Soviet era, because its manifestation caused incalculable trauma

and suffering in its obsessive effort to transform the human personality. Which proves ultimately these experiences in various prisons and camps, is that ideological reeducation is a utopia that is not actually achievable, even with the attempts of disturbing the mental processes of victims. Ideological reeducation, the radical transformation of the human being is ultimately a Soviet myth, powered by Soviet ideology, by various scientists, by the impostors, by the active occult movement in the beginning of the Soviet era.

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