

CAN ROMANIA REVIVE FOR THE ECONOMIC HISTORY WORLD CONGRESSES?

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Abstract

The present study regards Romania's participation to the Economic History World Congresses – essential events in the international scientific panorama. Despite some difficulties, during the period 1994-2012, this participation was substantial. Afterwards, it was diminished. It is the duty of the young generation to come, therefore, to the revival of the Romanian Economic History.

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During my professional travels, for education and research in France, Great Britain, Rennes and Saint-Malo as well, I have met, among many others, a special man with remarkable empathy, Edmond Hervé, the mayor of Rennes for about 5-6 seats. Some time ago, around 1997-1998, it seems he had been the Minister of Health as well. Under his ministry, however, he was charged for not checking blood transfusions and this unfortunately generated the AIDS infection in the case of some patients while checking blood transfusions came into force a bit later. A huge trial took place, with many court appearances, many charges and pleadings and the judges found an original verdict to give: „Responsable, mais pas coupable” (Responsible for, but not guilty). We are likely to be charged similarly, although with amendments, for our lack of reaction regarding the neglect, the almost total ignorance of the study of Economic History in the specialized academic branches. Undoubtedly, we are

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responsible for it. And to what ‘guilty of charge’ is concerned, this is to remain debatable. However, in comparison with Edmond Hervé, we are to feel ‘guilty of charge’. There is no way to understand the economic present, there is no way to understand the economic future – ours, Europe’s, the world’s – there is no way to fulfil the mission of an economist without studying Economic history.

I raise, therefore, an important problem for the economic sciences in general and from the point of view of the Romanian Academy as well, a great prestigious institution which is fundamental and it represents the engine and coordination for scientific research. Namely, the problem of World Congresses of Economic History, a highly international authority in communication and debates, in economic progress. Lately, the presence of Romania, of its representatives to the named Congresses has been revealed as ‘bright’ especially by absence (1-2 contributions, almost without papers). I raise this problem entirely entitled to do so. My contribution with papers published by the Congresses was substantial – the only Romanian presence, as such, to the Economic History World Congresses in Milan (1994) and Madrid (1998). Afterwards, being chosen president of department within the Scientific Committee of Congresses, I have encouraged the younger colleagues I had in Sibiu and Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Deva etc. to come up with papers, I have approved their papers and those of researchers from other countries, as I was in charge of, having, at the same time, further on, my own contribution. I was in charge of the respective departments which dedicated special papers to the secular evolution within the European and the global context of economies in Central and East Europe but not only. For example, “Countries from Central and East Europe «go, return, go» Towards Market Economy”; “Industrialization, Cain and Abel in Modern Version” etc. The papers were debated in the above-mentioned Congresses in Buenos Aires (2002), Helsinki (2006), Utrecht (2009), Stellenbosch, South Africa (2012).

Certainly, every time I proposed and explained the thematic within the department, it was voted – adopted by the Scientific Committee of Congresses, me, being responsible with the quality of all papers in the section. In my entire activity, therefore, I was supported efficiently by the National Economic History Commission and the History of Economic Thought attached to the specialized department of the Romanian Academy, especially through the two of its successive presidents, the regretted academicians N.N. Constantinescu and then, Iulian Văcărel. Most of the studies presented at the Congresses and the ones discussing their development were published, besides the reminded congress volumes abroad and in the journal of “Studies of Economic History

and the History of Economic Sciences” of the Romanian Academy. This was again and again a Romanian window open widely towards the world.

Unfortunately, after 2012, I would make long, uncomfortable journeys, at my age, and due to lack of financial means we gave them up (every time, we gave money from our own pocket to be present, because the Academy “had no funds”). Therefore, Romania’s activity, within such Congresses that followed, ended with Kyoto, Japan and Los Angeles, USA. Unfortunately, slight chances are shown to revive Romania’s presence at the Congresses. And this is bad because at such high events there have been debated in evolution, in the relativity of time and space, fundamental matters of development, of human progress, approached, as a rule, from a perspective as enhancing as possible, many centuries, even millennia ahead on all continents. This has been a matter of industrialization and industrial revolutions, from craftsmanship to the great modern industries nowadays and to the “re-industrialization”. It has, therefore, been a matter of technical progress and its consequences; it has also been a matter of agricultural evolution, ownership and, by consequence, a matter of the agrarian problem in the world, a matter of evolution in the food pattern and the amendments that intervened as such. It has been about the great world commercial routes, from seas to the Atlantic and the Pacific and then, about the modern trading on the internet, about how the banking system evolved from exchangers to the banks in the Republic of Venice and Genoa, to the capital, classical and modern financial market, about the globalization of these markets. It has been about the labour market, globalized as well, of emigration and immigration, along time, and their perspectives, of the colonial system with its good and bad and its evolution afterwards. It has been about the fight against terrorism, about the road leading from anarchy to terrorism, with its ‘nest sweetened’ into ignorance, fundamentalism, poverty, about the fight against poverty with a complex matrix, viewed as a specific disease, with national, regional, global excuses and that involve government measures as well as communitarian, global, social, cultural etc., about the serious problems of environment that revealed in nuce, ever since antiquity, about Anthropocene and Anthropocenia, about forests, waters, air, underground, about what the future reserves and the way we can prevent damages. It has been about health, the spread of the epidemics but especially of the great endemics and pandemics, about the institutions created in time and nowadays in order to prevent, about standards and health policies in time, about the types of market economies with an emphasis on the social and solidary economy discovered in Germany ever since the times of Fr.W. Raiffeisen, and afterwards in France etc., about the

relations in time between protectionism and liberalism, about the complex relationship between the national independence and development, between communitarianism and globalism on one hand and development on the other; between urbanization and reurbanization. It has been about the influence of political factors, of political strategies, of revolutions, of frontiers, of the relationship in time between the individual and community etc. A panoramic view of the world economy, so tormented, of the yesterday world, of today and surely, tomorrow... However, the world has been ruled, to a great extent, by financial, individual and social interests and this must be kept in mind. It has been ruled, under certain circumstances, by faith, dignity and this must be kept in mind as well.

There is to be added that at the World Economic History Congresses the participants have been, as a rule, researchers and prestigious professors from 80-90 countries of the world, countries with their Academies joined to EHIA (The Economic History International Association), member States paying an annual fee which is not to be neglected. Nevertheless, Romania, having the Romanian Academy as a joint of EHIA, behold, pays the annual fee, but we do not benefit from it due to the lack of participation with more papers to the Congresses. I have the feeling that the shown situation needs to be quickly remedied. While absenting, maybe the effects are not immediate but they can seriously see later on. The absence of Romania in such a scientific forum cannot but have consequences.

I shall add that, to the Congresses, there have participated 40-50 researchers from the USA, 20-25 researchers from Great Britain, 30-50 researchers from France, similarly, from Italy, Spain, Germany, 20-25 researchers from Russia, numerous from China, from India, from Japan, Australia, countries in Africa, Indonesia, 10-12 researchers from Ukraine etc., all of them, from the most prestigious institutions of education and research. From Romania, until 2012, 4-5 researchers from LUCIAN BLAGA University – the Professors: Corvin Lupu, Lucian Giura, then, Silvia Mărginean, Răzvan Șerb, Dan-Alexandru Popescu, Grațian Lupu, Alin Opreana -, about 1-2 from ASE Bucharest, Maria Mureșan, for example, from Brașov - Ileana Tache, with remarkable papers etc. Afterwards, almost nothing...

Nevertheless, we miss more and more the volumes of “Studies of Economic History and the History of Economic Thought” patronized by the Romanian Academy and which, for the moment, are off stock. Still, I have the hope that younger researchers – some of them prepared by me – will take resolutely over such a prestigious relay. They need not only volition but also

adequate knowledge, economic culture etc. I will bring my contribution to that anyway. I even dare to show that lack of knowledge generated by the lack of presence are revealed, obviously, in several researches that are undertaken in economy, and lack international validation. In fact, even theoretically, the national, European and global dimensions of thought and action are drawn and developed also within the above-mentioned framework of communication and reflection.

References

- The Acts of the Economic History World Congresses