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-IN HONOREM GHEORGHE LAZAROVICI-

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Avertisment 

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EULOGIUM FOR GHEORGHE LAZAROVICI. ROMANIA IN EUROPE

It gives me pleasure to offer a personal appreciation of Professor Gheorghe Lazarovici, and to recall the history of a collaboration. This must of necessity include an element of personal reminiscence. I hope that you will forgive it in the circumstances.

The best way to understand his contribution is to place him in a context; that of the “*oameni mari*” of Romanian archaeology. In order to do so we must evaluate what the term signifies in European perspective. Romania does possess many such notable figures, and it is appropriate to recall their names.

Before the disasters of World War II had weakened Europe sufficiently to allow the cult of Marxism to try and finish the job, the societies of the south-east were already far advanced in sophistication and potential. Not only in *Mitteleuropa* but also on the streets of Bucharest there were fine buildings and well-dressed people, who found their inspiration and identity in European culture.

Temperamentally, the Romanians favoured the artistic flair of Paris. To that great centre of creativity turned the truly great son of Moldavia, Georges Enescu; composer, conductor, violinist and gentleman, whom I met in London. He was the teacher of Yehudi Menuhin, who considers in his autobiography that “*the Romanians are the most musical people of Europe*”. The Bach Double Violin Concerto played by these two is an interpretation which has never been surpassed. This musicality is indeed confirmed by the many Romanian conductors, musicians and singers currently in Europe and the USA.

To Paris, on foot from his village of Hobîța in Muntenia, there also came Constantin Brancuși, undoubtedly the greatest and most seminal sculptor of the twentieth century. He too was a Romanian peasant lad, and I was fortunate to know him when he was working in his Paris atelier in the

Impasse Ronsin¹. His sculptural repertory echoes the *stâlpi* and wood-carvings of his native land. His complex of monuments at Târgu Jiu, the Table of Silence, the Gate of the Kiss, and the Endless Column, are highly original modifications of landscape. Our prehistoric ancestors also left their imprint on the landscape. The Romanians have a particular genius for abstract forms of sculpture. In their textiles, and even in their prehistory, they largely avoided sentimental designs “*cu flori*”. The geometric kilims of the Banat are not too distant from the designs found in the Neolithic. This touches on the themes of Ethnoarchaeology and Prehistory which Gheorghe Lazarovici and myself came to explore in the course of our fieldwork. Without his collaboration and friendship and that of many others, I would have achieved very little in Romania.

I return briefly to the theme of *Great Men*, the centrality of European culture, and the failure of its 20th Century enemies to destroy it. I refer to the life of Professor Grigore Nandriș, not from any lack of modesty, but to illustrate how already in the 1920s a peasant son of a Romanian farming family from Bucovina, one of many, could attend University in Vienna, take a Doctorate in Cracow, attend the Sorbonne, and by the 1950s be appointed in exile Professor of Comparative Slavonic Philology in London. Ironic thanks must go to the destruction of his home in Cernăuți, of his family², and of his life’s work, by the Soviet invasion. *Aceasta este soarta oamenilor mari: să se nască între vite și să moară între tâlhari*. It is not enough to have survived. Now we must prosper.

This peasant lad was also a student of Vasile Pârvan, who laid the foundations of Dacian archaeology. On his death bed he gave my father his great work *Getica*, suitably inscribed. The Soviets threw the books they confiscated in Cernăuți into a cinema. Some years later, thanks to the inscription, the volume was identified in an *anticariat* in Bucharest, and it made its way back to me.

¹ J. G. Nandriș, *Echoes in the Artefacts; Memory, Form and Prehistory in Brancusi*, In: *Brâncuși la apogeu. Noi perspective*, Colocviu internațional, București–Tg. Jiu, 18–21 Mai 2001, Academia Română, Ministerul Culturii, Comitetul UNESCO pentru Dezvoltare Culturală și Institutul de istoria artei “G. Oprescu”.

² Anița Nandriș-Cudla, *Amintiri din viață. 20 de ani în Siberia*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1997 (*Twenty years in Siberia – Memories from Life*, Publishing House of the Romanian Cultural Foundation, Bucharest, 1998).

I draw a moral from this little story; that if there is a written record, and a fearless oral and behavioural memory, a people may survive, just as well as their books. Archaeology is not just about the past. With the aid of Ethnoarchaeology it moves between memories of the past and the present.

I can only mention some personalities at random. Constantin Nicolaescu-Plopşor was a great figure in the development of Palaeolithic studies in Romania. Unfortunately, I did not know him personally, nor the great Romanian and European historian Nicolae Iorga. So I take the opportunity to urge all young students to seek out the *oameni mari* of their day. If they really are *great men*, and not just insecure figureheads, the student will not be rebuffed.

As a student, I familiarised myself with sites and museums across Europe, and when I entered the mighty portals of the Muzeul de Istorie al Transilvaniei in Cluj-Napoca, there, in the first room on the left of the entrance passage, I discovered *un om mare*. Constantin Daicoviciu was seated in a vaulted chamber surrounded by heaps of paper, rather like a Rembrandt etching. Although he was such a distinguished figure, he could not have been more helpful to me as a young student. I take this as an example to all of us, as we grow old and tend to feel that we are more important than we are. I recollect acts of kindness more powerfully than temporary setbacks.

I went on to collaborate, in addition to Lazarovici, with another outstanding figure of immense individuality and scholarship; Constantin Daicoviciu's son, Hadrian. Together we excavated a Dacian house on "*Terasa cu Grîu*" at Grădiştea Muncelului. The heavy equipment and pumps for flotation technology were carried on mens' backs up the steep Dacian terraces to recover carbonised plant remains³. On my departure, rather than carry the flotation machine back across Europe, I donated it to the grateful Romanian nation, a gesture which was poorly appreciated by the British Academy.

In recalling the history of research into plant remains in Romania, the extraordinary achievements of Părintele Constantin Matasă of Piatra Neamţ must be recognised. From the Cucuteni site of *Frumuşica* he not only

³ J. G. Nandris, *Aspects of Dacian Economy and Highland Zone Exploitation*, In: *Dacia*, S.N., XXV, 1981, p. 231-254.

published the archaeology in exemplary fashion, but he identified, measured and quantified the carbonised plant remains, without having access to the later technology. As if this was not sufficiently unprecedented, he somehow contrived to publish the book in wartime conditions in 1945. I treasure his very last copy of *Frumușica*, which he so generously gave me. He is portrayed holding the book, in the frescoes of his church. May his memory be eternal.

He is not the only son of the church to contribute to archaeology, and I recall at random Părintele Petre of Govora, guardian spirit of the *Mănăstirea dintr'un Lemn* and the saline streams of *Valea Răii*. There are other names and sites which we could only mention, and many of real significance whom we must omit. They are found throughout Romania, because all this activity, whether environmental, archaeological or ethnoarchaeological is in one sense an aspect of landscape archaeology.

Across the varied landscapes of Romania, Vladimir Dumitrescu, was digging at Cășcioarele in Oltenia, and Mircea Petrescu-Dâmbovița in Moldavia. Vasile Boroneanț, whom we sadly lost on the 4th July 2014, dug in the Iron Gates of the Danube. I excavated on the Serbian shore at Lepenski Vir, and then just across the river with Ghiță Lazarovici at Gornea. Only he could have arranged to excavate in such extreme frontier conditions of the time, or had the courage to do so. There are other names of which the young in particular should be aware, not always strictly archaeological, but whom I was privileged to know. Mihai Pop and Mihai Dăncuș contribute to the mainstream of ethnography, of which ethnoarchaeology became a tributary. So did Horea Bernea of the Muzeul Țaranului Român, and the important sculptor Paul Neagu. I miss them both for they were men of great originality. We all three shared birthdays, and an appreciation of the aesthetic dimensions of Romanian culture. A more intellectual dimension is represented by Virgil Câdea, and his daughter Ioana Feodorov; and by the philosopher of European importance Constantin Noica, and his son by Wendy Muston, who became the hermit Fratele Rafael. It took me two days to find his remote refuge in the Carpathians. I like the expression: “*Meșter-grindă al Poporului Român sunt Munții Carpați*”. It was on those highlands that successive waves from the east, Goths, Gepids, Huns, Avars and too many others, broke in vain against the Romanian population.

I do not regret pausing over these names because I think they should be remembered by the old and conveyed to the young. We have not exhausted the story of *oameni mari*, and *oameni de Știință*. But we must pass to the collaboration between *unu mare și unu mai mic*; *Ghiță și eu*. I referred earlier to the written record and to memories of the past. But both of these are absent from Prehistoric Archaeology. We cannot directly access the behaviour, beliefs and practices of our prehistoric ancestors. They made their choices, but what survives for us are the material remains of their behaviour. So how are we to arrive at an understanding of **long-term changes in human behaviour?** – because that is the fundamental subject matter of archaeology. Stereotyped images of cave men in skins only serve to betray ignorance of the immense capabilities and achievements of prehistoric peoples. This is a failure of the creative imagination, and of a profession.

This is why together Gheorghe Lazarovici and I evolved our field methods for the *Highland Zone Comparative Ethnoarchaeology Project*. The name is an accurate description, but a little cumbersome. Ethnoarchaeology is the study of the material outcome of behaviour in the process of formation; and indeed of destruction, since that is the point at which it enters the archaeological record. It is Comparative because it is universal, and because although individual sites can seem small and unimportant, they gain significance in the wider context. It has the advantage of being much less expensive than full-scale excavation.

We found our subject matter beyond ethnography, and beyond ethnohistory. We sought to understand the conditions governing exploitation of the highland zone, especially by the *păcurar* at the *stâne* of the Carpathians. We studied behaviour and its outcome in the Romanian village; a rich source which sometimes still reflects European modes of behaviour which were once much more widespread. We moved between the present and the past, like the shepherds moving between the highlands and the lowlands. We sought to extract archaeology from a preoccupation with classifying artefacts. Instead we sought to extract significance from the objects. Our study of behaviour and its outcomes, in the context of landscape and environment, was truly landscape archaeology before its time. We tested and refined our *modus operandi* beside the camp fire or in the *stâna*. We evolved recording

methods for our sites to ensure that topographical factors⁴ were not forgotten. We planned a multitude of on-site features, at a scale usually of 1:200. We recorded the behaviour and relationships on site, between men and animals, but also between the animals themselves, and to predators such as the bear and wolf. Seasonal stages are a feature of these relationships, and their interaction with the environment. We studied the stadial hierarchies of seasonal sites, the *sălaș*, and the the *cățun*, and even *stâne* consisting entirely of women.

Animal behaviour has been pressed into the service of mankind since prehistoric times. The first animal to be domesticated was the dog, facilitating subsequent developments such as pastoralism. Only when you have stood at a good distance behind Lazarovici as he confronts the most aggressive of the local pack of sheep dogs are you truly grateful for the natural hierarchies of dominance in animal behaviour; *i.e.*, don't wave around your arms, or your staff (*bâta*). Just be top dog.

We remarked on the contrast between the sheepdog, who lives a proud and dangerous life in the social context of his pack, his flock, and his territory, protecting them from bears and men; and the village dog who cringes away from the raised arm and fawns on its masters for scraps of food. It seemed to us by extension to reflect the inverse relationship within humanity between those who aspire to the dignity of freedom, and those who prefer security.

We supplemented conventional archaeological excavation with flotation for carbonised plant remains, and made borings in peat cores for the pollen spectra which would inform us about past environments⁵. We sought for the first time the sources of archaeological obsidian not in the office but in the landscape. We proved many of the accepted speculations to be unfounded, and sourced obsidians with neutron activation analysis at the Harwell Nuclear Reactor for their identifying trace elements.

This strategy of working to collect first-hand data in the field required almost military standards of logistics. Novices who were too slow to adjust to

⁴ Such as Siting, Altitude, Location (Slope / Spur / Saddle / Hollow / Crest / Summit) and Orientation, Aspect, Gradient, Environment, Water, Soil, Vegetation, Resources, Intervisibility, Access, Winds, or Microclimate.

⁵ While boring for pollen in underwater peat deposits in a shallow pond at one site, we encountered a crunchy white deposit, and continued through it. The villagers watched impassively from the margin. "Ah, yes," they said later: "... *there were some German soldiers ...*".

rain, mud, cold, wolves, bears, sheepdogs and cooking outdoors soon found their understanding unexpectedly improved by bitter experience, and firm guidance from Lazarovici. He is a scholar, a leader of men, a practical archaeologist, a creative academic, and a teacher and administrator. He fits into a long Romanian tradition of *oameni mari* to which I have drawn your attention. He gained the respect of teams under his leadership, both young and old. He is well-respected internationally, and has made major contributions to conferences and symposia. In that cosmopolitan spirit he showed himself open to new ideas in international collaboration. He has extended his support to my own fieldwork and research in Romania since at least the 1970s. Without this collaboration and friendship I would have achieved very little in Romania.

His published work, including at least eight books and over 200 articles, is too extensive to summarise here. It documents the immense archaeological contribution which he has made, based on original fieldwork and excavation. He has made a particular contribution to our knowledge of the Neolithic, especially in regard to the Vinča Culture in the Banat and its ritual content. His legacy continues in his students. He ensured that Neolithic material in the museums of the Banat was newly displayed and interpreted to reflect the achievements of ethnoarchaeology. He evolved his own methods for the statistical recording of excavated artefacts, and welcomed the opportunities opened up by information technology. He introduced Comparative Ethnoarchaeology to take its place in university courses.

I have tried to show how he fits into the Romanian tradition of *oameni mari*, whom we must remember at the same time. He is master of a whole range of abilities, and these deserve to be recognised. Above all he was open, critical and receptive to every new idea. It is a privilege to call him Friend.

6th November 2014

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