

Babuts, Nicolae. Review. "*Mărgineanu, Nicolae. Witnessing Romania's Century of Turmoil: Memoirs of a Political Prisoner.*" Translated by Calin Cotoiu; Edited by Denis Deletant. Rochester, NY: Rochester Studies in East and Central Europe. University of Rochester Press, 2017. 350 p. Boydell and Brewer Inc. 2017.

<https://boydellandbrewer.com/witnessing-romania-s-century-of-turmoil.html>

Mărgineanu's book is an astonishing tour de force. It contains an account of his sixteen years of unjust imprisonment by the communist regime, but also personal revelations of his childhood and his teenage years in school in Transylvania's village and towns that would indeed be something new to most readers, but for those who have had a similar experience of farm life, it would be occasion for reminiscences. Some of his pages contain details of this life that read like a novel, while others formulate an account of the intellectual life that resembles a history of the period, a history that only one who lived through that period would know in such details.

For example, he speaks about his modest beginnings in his native village as he describes his job taking the cattle to pasture. He describes his experience when going to school in Blaj and his thoughts about the *călușari* dance and the shout "*up opincă, up.*" "*Opincă*" was their footwear they wore when dancing. Again, an example of details that an outsider would not know but that a village reader would find it familiar. He also dramatized his first day in the Blaj school. For example, in the Hungarian language class, the teacher asks a student his name and when the student answers without the Hungarian accent, the teacher yells at him.

At the same time, he points out that in the "triumphal entry into Alba Iulia," the Romanian army took the same path that Michael the Brave took. Mărgineanu has a flair for relating historical events and details. He mentions many Romanian writers like Creangă and Goga, and of course Eminescu. He points out the connection with France and speaks about the relations among many of the scholars and scientists in Germany, Britain and the United States. The reports, many of them relating very personal exchanges, would normally not be found in historical accounts and thus represent a valuable source of information. Among the writers and scientists, he mentions are Dilthey, W. James, Husserl, Freud, Jung, Cassirer, Warner, Stern, and Planck. He mentions Köhler and Wertheimer's relations with Einstein. He also mentions scientists that were forced to leave Germany when Hitler came to power. Köhler did not comply with the regulation to begin a lecture with the "Heil Hitler" salute. He went to the United States, William Stern had to resign, Werner was dismissed, and "Martha Muchow committed suicide because, even though she was Aryan, she was guilty of working with Stern" (68).

Mărgineanu connects his own movements with the activity of the day at the German Universities. He recounts that the University of Hamburg (where he went) was new "because it was set up at the end of World War I in the building of what had been the institute for colonial studies, serving the German colonial empire. Losing the colonies left it without activity" (66). Moreover, he tells us: "The chair and director of the institute [at Hamburg University], Professor Stern, came from the University of Breslau. Also there was Heinz Werner, an associate professor of evolutionary psychology. General psychology was handled by F. Heider, who was then professor at Smith College, where

Koffka taught as well. Labor psychology in professional orientation was handled by assistants Roloff and Wunderlich (66).

While he offers a historical tableau, Mărgineanu also paints an intimate portrait of the young woman who was to become his wife. On the occasion of his application to the Rockefeller Foundation, he describes in detail the director's Tracy B. Kittredge visit to Cluj. Historical events and personal details are combined to create a harmonious whole whose dominant trait is authenticity. In Paris he describes the meeting with Professors Carl Becker from Cornell University and H. Blumer from the University of Chicago. This was also the time when his wife received a dinner invitation from Professor Kittredge's wife. During his stay in the United States again Mărgineanu describes his schedule, which included staying with professor G. W. Allport at Harvard University. He continues: "In addition to Allport's courses, I went regularly to Whitehead's courses as well as to Murray's courses" (87). He describes the history of the establishment of Harvard and Yale and mentions details of the activity of scholars: "Most American psychopathologists did their apprenticeship at Harvard, and they went on to found clinics at the other big universities" (89). As one can see, Mărgineanu tells us about events that took place during the times between the two wars and mentions details that would be hard to find in ordinary historical books. Thus, he tells us that in the 1933 Chicago World Fair the keynote speech was given by Professor Milikan from the physics department and a Nobel laureate and that Niels Bohr spoke on behalf of foreign scientists. He speaks about the life at the American universities, like Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Duke, and Columbia, revealing the professors' personalities, their knowledge, and their relations that only a close observer would know.

Interestingly enough, Mărgineanu does point to the separation between the rich and the rest of American population as a negative, but he admires American democracy for the following: "American democracy, as it strives to be, starts from respect for a contrary opinion. This is its greatness and splendor!" (122)

Once back in Romania, Mărgineanu praises the activity of the professors at the Department and Institute of Psychology at the University of Cluj and offers extraordinary details about their contributions. Chapter nineteen is devoted to the political struggle of King Carol of Romania and different political parties including the right-wing Iron Guard. During the attempt by the legionnaires to assassinate Professor Goangă, the rector, Mărgineanu himself ran to the scene and asked Roșca to help the professor. And Roșca's answer was: "Are you crazy? You want them to shoot us too?" (147) Luckily the ambulance came in time to save the bleeding professor. (The policeman assigned to protect the rector was killed). Clearly, fear lurked in the vicinity of those assassinations. Mărgineanu's verdict is that the misfortunes came because the politicians did not obey the dictum "Don't stray away from the people" offered by Simion Bărnuțiu in 1848 (see p. 145). Chapter twenty-one recounts the loss of Northern Transylvania and Bessarabia and most of Bukovina and the shock that it produced. The crowd's response to the news is testimony to the Romanians' love of their country.

When the Germans retreated and the Russians entered the Romanian territory including Transylvania, Mărgineanu describes in the most precise terms the turmoil that followed. The hope of regaining Northern Transylvania and the contacts with American representatives were the only bright lights. Mărgineanu points to the fact that in dealing with the American representatives he and other Romanians had to present arguments in

favor of the Romanian claims to Transylvanian territories and to fight for the Romanian right to Transylvania in view of the Hungarian claims that were clearly false.

And the trial? It was an ideological sham. They needed the false accusations for the communists to blame the Americans during their meetings: "And the truth is that Moscow's agents condemned the sons of the Romanian people who oppose Stalinist imperialism." Mărgineanu does not absolve the individuals, but points to "the sociopolitical pathology and criminality inherent to dictatorship" (248-249).

What is the fundamental understanding that emerges from Mărgineanu's book? One example that can pass unobserved is Mrs. Medianu, the director of the dormitory and lecturer at the Chemistry Department, at the University in Cluj. She could not have the "happiness of having children of her own. The students housed in her dormitory were her 'daughters'" (60). Another example, perhaps a clearer one, was during the time the inmates were brought on the train from Sibiu to Bucharest. An old lady on the train saw them and took pity on them. She took out food, started to eat, and gave them some. "You are not allowed to give them food," the sergeant barked at her. "Why not, they are people, not dogs. Can't you see how thin they are." When the inmates said to her "may God reward you, old mother," the sergeant tried to mock their belief in God. "They finally got her out. To my dying days, I shall not forget her steadfast kindness" (265).

When we consider the inhuman treatment of the political inmates the beatings, the cold, the hunger, and the polluted air and see that they would appreciate the smallest sign of goodwill, we would be justified in concluding that what informs the book is the opposition between hate and ill will on the one side and the basic humanity and compassion on the other. Today more than at any time, Romania is among the countries that look to the West and to the United States of America in particular for guidance and support, and Mărgineanu in his book shows why. I recommend it highly.