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## Mircea Eliade, Under the Terror of History (1941-1945)

*Abstract: This study makes a radiography of the 1941-1945 period, which Mircea Eliade spend in Lisbon, as cultural counsellor, after having left Romania (as it proved later, for ever), in April 1940, under extremely tense historical and political circumstances. I examine not only the writings he published during this time span--books and essays circulated both in Portugal and Romania—but also the genesis of his editorial projects, which would configure the author's later literary works and those on the phenomenology of religion. I closely scrutinise the trajectory of Mircea Eliade, who took great pains to distance himself from Romanian issues (in the 1930s, they had made him align himself with the Iron Guard), in order to construct his career as an internationally acknowledged writer. In the main, the reading grid by means of which I investigate the evolution of the writer is provided by the journal that Eliade kept throughout "the Portuguese period"; it remained quasi-unknown for about half a century, until the Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, decided to print it, in 2006, under the title The Portuguese Journal.*

*Key words: journal, diaristic writing, Latinity, cultural propaganda, Salazar's revolution, nationalism, the Second World War, hermeneutics, subliminal message*

When, on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1941, Mircea Eliade, together with his wife Nina, was hurriedly leaving London after being subjected to a humiliating body search, in the airport, (Great Britain had just broken its diplomatic relations with Romania), to embark on a new diplomatic mission in Lisbon, hardly did he suspect that his Portuguese "sojourn" would last so long. Nevertheless, much longer than he would have liked (in the last note in the *Portuguese Journal* he exclaims in disbelief: "Four years and seven months spent in Portugal" (1: 383), in a country that, obviously, was not up to his expectations (in July 1942, during his only and last visit to Romania, he unsuccessfully manoeuvred to get a similar appointment in Italy). "The Portuguese stay" protracted beyond the period of the war, by a few months, necessary for him to obtain the French visa, in September 1945.

It was not the duration, but the consequences that turned the Portuguese period into a decisive moment in Eliade's life. The ordeal of the war, Nina's death, the torturing questions that literary and scientific creation raised, all these decisively marked the destiny of the author. After Portugal, nothing would be as before.

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The long Lusitanian stay redefined the contours of a life and a career that would put him in the orbit of world fame, which he had dreamt of and had worked for so hard, ever since the times of the "short-sighted adolescent".

Landed, against his will, in "small Portugal", as an obscure press secretary, he did not have many reasons to be contented. Three months later, on the very first page of his diary, he bitterly complains of "the intellectual poverty of Lisbon", and fears of slow, but sure self-degradation (1: 95). However, unlike Cioran and Ionesco<sup>2</sup>, his congeners, a strong character, Eliade learned Portuguese in a very short time, took his new appointment seriously, and set down to work. In the history of Romanian diplomacy, never had 'cultural propaganda' been so substantial and efficient as the perseverance of a non-professional diplomat like Eliade managed to make it. In an essay, which x-rays, with an *esprit de finesse* that is so defining of his writing, since the publication of his *Paradoxul roman / The Romanian Paradox*, the Portuguese period of Eliade, Sorin Alexandrescu makes the following observation: "the propaganda carried by Mircea Eliade does not come from service duty, but from his own convictions and initiative" (14).

Although, Portugal looked "provincial" to him ("Why should one live in Portugal, when there is Paris!") (Eliade 1: 215), it did not take him a long time to throw bridges and draw analogies between Romania and Portugal, two "small countries", located at the margins of European Romanity and completely ignored by the "great cultures". Beyond the obligations that derived from his official appointment (initially, he was only "second press-secretary") (Turcanu 396), Eliade had the deep conviction that, no matter where he was, be it Portugal, or any other country, he could not abdicate his responsibility in serving the culture he belonged to, with a kind of fanaticism, which shows some signs of diminishing, towards the end of his stay in the Iberian country. Few of the longer articles and studies published in Portugal, i.e., *Os romenos, Latinos de Oriente* (1943), are mere *vulgata*—he went to pains to write them and had the feeling that he was wasting his creative powers on small-scale projects ("The feeling of my sterilization in Portugal") (Eliade 1:230). However, he finalized all of them, in the name of necessary servitude.

While *Eminescu-poetul rasei romane* [Eminescu The Poet of the Romanian Race] (1942) remains a mere propaganda text, much indebted to the clichés and the visible *residua* of nationalist vulgate, *Camões și Eminescu* [Camoës and Eminescu] (1942), or the essay on *saudade* and "dor" [Rom. for longing], give, *in nuce*, the true measure of the great comparatist and of the future morphological studies on European cultures.

The federating idea that runs like a red thread through Eliade's writings of the Portuguese period is *Latinitas*. Eliade's cultural activism responds to a double strategy: in the short term, he assumes the role of a go-between, planning to publish simultaneously, in Lisbon and in Bucharest, books and studies about the two cultures, an objective that he was able to accomplish only partially. They were meant to be parts of a long-range project

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<sup>2</sup> Appointed to a similar position, with the Romanian Legation, at Vichy, also in February 1941, Cioran turns all the government official against him, and, thus, puts an early end to his diplomatic career, only after two months and a half, while his successor, Eugene Ionescu, who left for the post in June 1942, a bit more "politically correct" than Cioran, succeeded in bringing his mission to an end, *tant bien que mal*, until he was dismissed by the Communist regime in Bucharest and, later on, condemned in a monstrous trial, generated by the publication of his vicious *Letter from Paris*, in March 1946 (see Marta Petreu 86-124, and Sergiu Miculescu, 108-126).

aiming at redefining Latinity. In his article *Ginta latina e regina* [The Latin Race Is Queen], published in the *Acção* newspaper, in February 1942, and after giving Caesar, i.e., France, what was Caesar's, Eliade questions, in vigorous terms, in the name of a "Latin solidarity" that had become weaker and weaker, the centripetal perception of Romanity, with France as sole centre of irradiation. According to Eliade, in the latter part of the 19th century, neo-Latin cultures conceded France the role of legitimate promoter of the virtues of Romanity, strongly believing that they would be able to converse with, and mutually know one another, through the mediation of the "elder sister". However, this 'delegation of representation' had a perverse effect: the centre chose to ignore the ex-centric neo-Latin cultures and, even worse, the marginal cultures came to ignore one another. "It was believed", says Eliade, "that knowing France and speaking French meant having access to the values of the Latin world (...) It is sad to overhear a conversation between a Portuguese and a Romanian, or between an Italian and Spaniard, and to see that they know little about the modern literature of their interlocutors' (Eliade, "Ginta latina e regină", 284, 286).

Moreover, animated by universalist ideals and using the book as a cultural vector (mondialism *avant la lettre*, vehemently denounced?!), France had neglected its role as centre of the Latin world, thus weakening the "Latin solidarity" he had spoken about, at the beginning of the article. The engines of French culture, i.e., the great printing houses, which still had the authority of promoting writers on the great scene of the world, had been working at full power to encourage Russian, American, German, even Finnish and Dutch writers, at the expense of "Latin spiritual values". His blame on the French editorial industry was, naturally, *pro domo* plea; it is not however unimportant that, while the war was raging – truly, under the diplomatic umbrella of a neutral country – Eliade celebrated "Latin genius" (Eliade 1:290).

In his *Scrisorile din Paris* [Letters from Paris], Eugen Ionesco, in a less diplomatic manner – truly, he felt himself "protected", in the still unoccupied Paris –, clearly separates the waters between France, the last redout against barbarization, and the „primeval brutality” of "the brutish Roman Empire” (2:215), whose descendants are not specified however.

Eliade deplors the policy of the French printing-houses "which have published so many non-Romance books, but have done next to nothing to promote (neo-)Latin writers” (Eliade, *Ginta latina e regină*, 286). A few examples: Eça de Queiroz, Pio Baroja, Italo Svevo, Camões, Ramón de Valle Inclán, (almost absent from the French editorial landscape, while Pearl Buck (from whose work, he himself translated *The Fighting Angel* in 1939, only a year after the American writer had received the Nobel Prize), Maugham, Kipling, Cronin benefitted from maximum "visibility". In fact, Eliade, signals out those Spanish, Italian or Portuguese writers, less circulated in France, in order to insert, among them, some names of great Romanian writers, whose works had not been translated into French, or had been published by obscure French printing-houses. „Eliade's list” bets on established values, that is, classical authors, whose literary ideology rather illustrates the conservative slope of Romanian letters: Rebreanu, Sadoveanu, Cezar Petrescu, Hortensia Papadat-

Bengescu, Lucian Blaga, etc. Symptomatically, he mentions none of the writers of his own generation, nor of the avant-garde.<sup>3</sup>

In the traditionalist Portuguese milieu, Eliade does not risk evoking too innovative writers, since his strategy is to synchronize acknowledged Romanian writers with those from the Romance space, according to the formula: „Eça is a great unknown writer – so is Liviu Rebreanu” (Eliade, *Ginta latina e regină* 287) or : „His genius [Camões's a. n.] has added to the shared Mediterranean seascape of Romance Europe such a "barbarous" geography that it bears striking similarities only to the *mar tenebrosus* of the age of the great maritime discoveries. This is also true of Dacia's ancestral legends, of its people pastoral metaphysics, of their resignation in the face of death, and their feeling of direct participating and self-integrating into the eternal circuit of the Cosmos” (*ibidem* 290). Once more, Eliade speaks premonitorily: the myths of Dacia, the pastoral metaphysics, man's resignation in the face of death, and his the participation in the cosmic circuit are as many chapters of the book he would publish thirty years later at Payot: *De Zalmoxis à Gengis-Khan* [From Zalmoxis to Genghis Khan]. Possibly, he continues, when the West gets acquainted with Sadoveanu – an unfulfilled desideratum, among many others – he will surclass Panait Istrati, whom France (Eliade does not lose the opportunity to square accounts with the French left-wing intelligentsia) had granted blarney until 1929, when the author of *Kyra Kyralina* published the impressions of his travel through Soviet Russia!

Of Eliade's impassioned plea for the "decentralization" (a concept revived by the present-day discussion on the "Europe of the regions") of the cultural space of Latinity, in which each and every "voice" would stand a chance of asserting its own genius, Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, an assiduous practitioner of extrapolations and tendentious caricaturing, retains only „the campaign against democratic France” and „the homage paid to the Vichy regime and its leader” (Laignel-Lavastine 352-353).

It is no less true that *Ginta latină e regină* [The Latin Race Is Queen], like other Portuguese writings of Eliade's, bears the mark of the times, and strikes a discordant note through its references to the France revived under Marshall Pétain; the true France, the Romanian writer insists, is nationalist and Christian, as against the democratic, universalist and masonic France (2: 285), assertions, which measure the distance the author still had to walk in order to free himself completely of the *sequelae* of the nationalist ideology, he had practiced in Romania, in the latter part of the fourth decade.

If we do not include the two volumes that Eliade published in Romania, while on a diplomatic mission in Lisbon, namely, *Comentarii la Legenda Meșterului Manole* [Commentaries on the Legend of Master Manole] (1943) and *Insula lui Euthanasius* [The Island of Euthanasius] (1943) – the former retakes the contents of the course on the history and philosophy of religions delivered at the Faculty of Letters, in Bucharest, between 1936 and 1937, the latter anthologizes essays and articles written from 1931 to 1939--, among his "Portuguese writings", there remain only two properly "Portuguese" books, of unequal length and value: *Os Romanos, Latinos do Oriente* [Romanians, The Latin People of the

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<sup>3</sup> Occupying a similar position in France, Eugen Ionescu, compiles a more balanced list of Romanian writers to be translated into French, which includes E. Lovinescu, Zarifopol, Blaga, but also Eliade, Cioran, Noica, even ... Nae Ionescu! At the time, February 1944, he was still working with the Romanian Legation at Vichy! (See Eugen Ionescu, letter of 20 February 1944 to T. Vianu, in *Scrisori către Tudor Vianu*, 2: 235, and Ana Haranga, 37-39).

Orient), 1943, published in Portugal, soon after *Salazar și revoluția în Portugalia* [Salazar and the Revolution in Portugal] appeared in Bucharest (1942).

The two books materialize the "cultural shuttle" Eliade intended to create, simultaneously in Bucharest and Lisbon, i.e., a favourable horizon for mutual understanding. *Os Romanos* (less than one hundred pages) should not be taken for what claims to be: a *précis*. All reviewers agree: „a work of cultural propaganda” (Linscott Ricketts, 2: 371), „a historiographical vulgate” (Alexandrescu 28), „a popularizing synthesis” (Zamfir, 1: 72). Like its Romanian pendant project – a book on the history and culture of Portugal, never printed –, it has an apparent thesis, namely, Romania and Portugal are in a similar situation: two small countries located at the margins of Romanity, a situation, which inscribes them on the trajectory of a similar destiny, from whose deciphering both will gain further insight, especially in the whirlwind of that critical historical moment. This is the subliminal message of the book about Salazar.

*Salazar și revoluția în Portugalia* [Salazar and the Revolution in Portugal] (1942) has been rightly read as a book with „a key”, however, without seeing in the Portuguese dictator „a kind of Catholic Ionescu” (Turcanu 408). Yet, it was obviously written by an Eliade affected not so much by short-sightedness (as in the times of adolescence) but by serious strabismus! With one eye, he browses thousands of pages of Portuguese history, with the other he permanently squints at his target audience, to whom the work is dedicated. The book, rather the message it contains, hidden in the text, is clearly disclosed in *The Portuguese Journal*.

Except for the pro-legionary [far right] publications, however, *in a different manner*, *Salazar* is Eliade's writing most indebted to that specific historical moment. Like Cioran, who, *in a different manner*, remained prisoner of the ideas expressed in the chapter on *Colectivism național* [National Collectivism] from his *Schimbară la față a României* [Romania's Transfiguration], and like Ionescu, who could no longer deny his signature on the last letter he sent from Paris and published in *Viața Românească* [Romanian Lifeway], on March 3 1946, Eliade's *Salazar* cannot be correctly understood, without reference to the immediate circumstances of its composition!

Taken out of its proper context, the monograph (more a history of modern Portugal) of this illuminated, ascetic, charismatic, though cautious, dictator, university professor of economy and finance, raises no interest nowadays. However, when placed in its own context, Eliade's book reveals its full significance and explicitly invites us to read it on two levels, at least: firstly, the chaotic historical picture of pre-Salazarian Portugal, torn by endless crises and intercline conflicts, which, the providential Salazar, who came to power, or, rather was invited to take the reins of government by General Carmona, puts and end to by setting up, *manu militari*, the *Estado Novo*, and, secondly, the palimpsest that Eliade wanted to convey to his Romanian readers.

Despite its impressive bibliography (typical of Eliade!), a heedy reader like Mihai Zamfir considers the book to be fictitious, rather than serious historical exegesis, an idea, for which he provides sufficient supporting evidence (1: 72-77). Sorin Alexandrescu also believes that Eliade only bears "the mask of historic objectivity", in this case (70).

Salazar becomes a *persona* from the first page of the *Journal*, where the author notes, on April 28 1941, his impressions of a popular manifestation, during which a fascinated crowd rendered homage to the Portuguese leader. The notes rather become the fiction writer, who makes sketches in the agenda he carries with him, than the reporter:

An ocean of heads, in the square. For hours all kinds of guns have been firing, from land, from sea and from the river...At 6 o'clock, Salazar appears in the balcony. The whole living mass, at his feet, roar... I then watched him speaking...with a thoughtful expression on his face, now and then, he raised his slacken left hand... (1: 95-96).

However, facts weigh in favour of Eliade. Truly, he is a historian in disguise, and has something else to say, more important than *Salazar and the revolution in Portugal*; he painfully (in the *Journal* he writes „disgusted”, 1: 177) puts together this false *Précis d'histoire*, to send an important message to his compatriots. Why, despite the "loathing" and the "disgust", did he give up writing the study on *Camões, Încercare de filozofie a culturii* [*An Essay on the Philosophy of Culture*], which he would have written with „much more passion” (*ibidem* 1: 118), in order to bring to an end the burden of the book about Salazar? We find the answer in the *Journal*, in a note contemporary with its writing:

I have chosen *Salazar* to serve, as much as possible, my country, to have at least the illusion that I am doing my duty in this time of war. The book will strengthen the position of Romania in the Portuguese press. This is what really matters (*idem*).

At this point, two brief comments are necessary. I would inscribe the verb *to serve* on the exergue. Eliade had always had a deep sense of duty that did not derive from his official obligations, but was strongly connected to the destiny of his people (the term is a recurrent one with Eliade) instead. It has a very personal, intimate meaning, excruciatingly inscribed in his being. At different locations in the *Journal*, he speaks of the suffering he feels in "his flesh", or that he is shocked "to the marrow" at the tragedy Romania was passing through.

The book on Salazar might be his own way of serving his country, at a climatic moment of its history, although he was far away from it then. How? Here, I dare make amendments to the above quotation from Eliade. Romania's position in the Portuguese press, which the publication of the book helped to strengthen, as Eliade had hoped, may or may have not been decisive, at that moment. Sensitive to Eliade's signal, many newspapers from Lisbon saluted its publication. Though generous, the commentaries the book received were understandably polite, because the local reviewers had no access to the text (it had not been translated into Portuguese). I favour another citation from the *Journal*, which sheds light on the true aim of the book:

....I think it indecent to publish, during the war, a book that has no connections with the political contingencies of my country. The history of the revolution, or of the counter-revolution is of interest to many and, in my opinion, it may prove especially useful for Romania” (1: 117-118).

Again, two short comments are needed here: 1<sup>o</sup> therefore, the book is about the political contingencies of his country and, 2<sup>o</sup> it was supposed to be of some service to Romania! With such a reading grid, offered by the author himself, *Salazar*, even if it were fiction, as Mihai Zamfir reads it, remains a book, whose key should be found in the reality of the Romanian historical moment. Hence the question: which Romanian history, the one that had just ended, or the current one? The question is legitimate, the more so as Eliade writes a

paradoxical book: about Portugal, yet useful to Romania! Which Romania was Eliade thinking of is not easy to answer. Sorin Alexandrescu perfectly diagnoses the crisis of identity that Eliade had been experiencing, ever since leaving Romania. Who, those whom he fondles as „the guys”, are and whose incarceration he still laments, in 1943, some time after the events<sup>4</sup>, is not difficult to guess; much more difficult is to identify those whom he calls, on several occasions, „my own ones”. It is also the author of *Mircea Eliade, dinspre Portugalia* [Mircea Eliade, a view from Portugal] who raises the proper question: for whom does Eliade work, and whom does he represent throughout these years"(30)? Sorin Alexandrescu subtly notes how Eliade's personal soteriological strategy intermingles with the general destiny of the Romanian nation:

...Eliade projects his own identity crisis against the historical options of the Romanian people: their determination to remain faithful to themselves and save themselves as a nation strengthens Eliade's hope that he too will be able to preserve his Romanian identity, a hope and a desire abundantly expressed in the *Portuguese Journal* (*ibidem* 31).

The truth is that in the '40s, Eliade was twice distanced from the reality of his native country. Firstly, geographically: he writes about a Romania which was not 'his' any longer, where hardly anyone spoke of him, „the leader” of his generation (*Salazar* receives only two reviews, of which one is not signed, in the Romanian press (Linscott Ricketts 2: 278); a dejected Eliade bitterly complains of the „utter mediocrity of Romanian cultural life and of the Romanian press”, which makes him exclaim: „I start feeling lonely in Romania.” (Eliade, *Jurnalul Portughez și alte scrieri* 1: 117)

On the other hand, Eliade was addressing to a Romania that had ceased to exist, more precisely, a Romania, where his suggestions had no chances of being implemented, even if we presuppose that those, who could, had the determination to do it. Through his *Salazar*, the cultural secretary in Lisbon was "dropping a hint" to his fellow citizens. Nevertheless, his „guide” came out too late to have any direct and immediate effect. In Romania, the dice had already been cast on the political scene, and thus the chance of a „Salazarian model”, which Eliade was proposing, at an inopportune moment, was missed. Romania had chosen a different approach; more exactly, it failed there, where the regime of Salazar had "moved all the pieces on the chess table" correctly.

The question that the book induces to the Romanian reader: did Romania have a Salazar in those years? – recalls a similar question we heard, after 1989, with reference to Havel, or Gorbachov! –, remains unanswered, in the end, because the virtual local Salazars, were either dead (of more or less natural death!), or had chosen a course of action that had nothing to do with Salazarism (Marshall Antonescu).<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> „The chain of disasters began in the autumn of 1937. I haven't been able to enjoy life ever since. After the boys' arrest, and until Stalingrad, I have been in mourning.” (Mircea Eliade, *Jurnalul portughez*, I, p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, in Romania, the fate of Salazar would have been sealed before his accession to power, as we are told in the opening sentences of the *Journal*: „the providential president, the elderly General Carmona, who, instead of having Salazar shot, according to well-established Romanian customs, made him the dictator of Portugal.” (Mircea Eliade, *Jurnalul portughez*, I, p. 96.) Everyone is free to cast anyone in the role of an autochthonous Salazar!

In his book, Sorin Alexandrescu makes a rigorous x-ray of Salazarism, whose defining features we briefly mention here: the edification of a new, authoritarian, Christian, Nationalist, yet non-Fascist state, --*Estado Novo*--, beyond the dualism of Communism-Nazism<sup>6</sup>, the preservation of the non-belligerent status for Portugal, the refusal to concede territories, and economic recovery. The Salazarian pluses roughly correspond to a few Romanian minuses, objectively *irreversible*, because Eliade's study is nothing else but „his personal projection of Romania's history into the history of Portugal” (43), in other words a Portuguese *success story* that failed in Romania.

Was Eliade in contradiction with his own project? Does he write a "useless" book? Yes, he is, if one takes *Salazar and the Revolution in Portugal*<sup>7</sup> seriously, as a viable model for Romania (and we have seen that Eliade cannot accept to publish a "useless" book "in times of war"<sup>8</sup>). The dice had already been thrown, and essential aspects of the "Portuguese model" were no longer (had they ever been?) relevant to the Romanian political configuration, while the situation on the front, after Stalingrad, left little room for hope.

No, if we read the book *otherwise* than under the regime of its immediate applicability. More arguments seem to me to converge to *not* seeing *Salazar* as a guide, whose *mode d'emploi* was expressly targeting Romania of the '40s.

<sup>1</sup> Although the analogies are obvious, Eliade was conscious that the Romanian pendant of the pragmatic Portuguese dictator did not really exist (although the book clearly reflects the "sliding" of the writer's sympathy from the members of the Legion, towards Marshall Antonescu); moreover, political wrangling had ceased in Romania, at the time he was writing *Salazar*. From the remote Portugal, where he was living, the only thing he could do was to put forward a *projective model*, to give, *post festum*, a lesson on political morals, however circumscribed by the adagio *what if* or, better, *it was not meant to be*. Considered from this perspective, the book looks more like a novel, as Mihai Zamfir would say, of the *politique-fiction* type. It is another political text of Eliade's, which confronts us with the idea that the political engagements of *men of culture* are sometimes infused with a (too) good doze of naivety; an innocently small one, in this case, as compared to Eliade's "legionary" publications.

<sup>2</sup> *Salazar* could be read not only as a *political* projection, but also as a *sentimental one*. Eliade agonizes over the plight of post-war Romania. Thus, the book would be an

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<sup>6</sup> Finding the third way, between the Communist Scylla and the Nazi Charybdis, was the preoccupation of the European left-wing intelligentsia. At the end of the '30s, Eugen Ionescu identifies it personalist philosophy, as it was being argued for, in the pages of the *Esprit* magazine, by Emmanuel Mounier, or Denis de Rougemont.

<sup>7</sup> The word *revolution* in the title of the book is not so innocent as it seems. Ultimately, Eliade had *only* credited the legionary movement [Romanian far-right paramilitary group, also known as the Iron Guard] with capacity of igniting a necessary spiritual revolution. The theme of the pre-eminence of the spiritual dominated the writings of the '27 generation, from the left to the right (Eugen Ionescu) of the political scene. Only, at the time when the book was published, the idea had already been discredited.

<sup>8</sup> He knows well his compatriots, and so he does not fear that the *strong sense of the book will be embezzled*: „I think that Antonescu will make a political platform out of the ideas expressed in this book. The cooperation between Carmona and Salazar seems to him to be the model of his own cooperation with General Antonescu; a General and a university professor of law, in both cases” (Mircea Eliade, *Jurnalul portughez*, 1: 118.)



imaginary construction, *mirroring* the destiny his *unfortunate* country (whom he represents, in this case not as a diplomat, but symbolically) in the history of the *fortunate* Portugal. Eliade, the fiction writer, conjures up the figure of an enlightened dictator and weaves the canvass of a favourable historical situation, shooting a film in *fondue-enchaîné*, overlapping the fanciful image of Romania with the real image of Portugal. The compensating function of such an *exercise in admiration* seems to respond to a pressing desideratum (as he saw it) for his own country, which, unfortunately, had few realistic chances of materializing.

<sup>30</sup> The book could also be interpreted as *visionary project*, with a resolute speaker, i.e., Eliade, who had always had the inner force of *getting out of the labyrinth*. Romania's state of affairs, in its decisive data, was gloomy, yet the contest had not been completely lost. When a ship is cast adrift, the only means to save whatever can be saved are those on board. In the absence of a Salazar, Eliade sincerely believed that Romania still had a future, under the leadership of Marshall Antonescu. In this way, he hoped, the supreme catastrophe, the danger that Romania might join "the great Slav community"<sup>9</sup>, could be avoided.

This represents a major shift in Eliade's geopolitical vision, which opens towards Europe now, as Sorin Alexandrescu rightfully notes:

On the one hand, this mental disposition, is totally new to Eliade, in the sense that he thinks not only as a Romanian, but also as an European; on the other hand, he has adapted himself to a Romania – caught in the world war, and post-legionary – that was different from the one of the preceding decade, when the author believed that Romania had its own destiny, separate from other countries. (108)

Although *Salazar and the Evolution in Portugal* ultimately demands a polyphonic reading, an obvious pragmatic intentionality, marked by the author's worries about Romania (as he had warned us!) inscribes it, even if its message never reached its addressee. Likewise, in July 1942, the message from Salazar to Antonescu did not get across either.<sup>10</sup> One could say that the messenger is dogged by ill luck in these two episodes, in which the *locutor*, convinced, as he is, of the importance of the signal he has just received, that is, the mission he has been entrusted with, constantly comes across an indifferent *interlocutor*, or a poor „hermeneutist“.

*Salazar* is not a historical study, although the author, in a manner that we are familiar with, sets off writing it like a true historian and invests his text with the appearance of solid historiographical research. In the *Journal*, Eliade informs us that he will attach "only a summary bibliography" to the book (1: 117); in reality, we are offered a real bibliographical feast, at the end of each chapter. Only, as it has already been said, one can notice a 'cleavage' between the imposing bibliographical apparatus and the facts in the text,

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<sup>9</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Jurnalul portughez*, I, p. 226. „Romania and the Romanian nation, in their elements of historical and cultural continuity, are going through the most serious crisis in their existence.” „I simply fear Russia, and its imperialist policy.” (*ibidem*, 199 and 371-372.)

<sup>10</sup> See the story of the "non-delivered message" in Sorin Alexandrescu, *Mircea Eliade, dinspre Portugalia*, 143-152, and in Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Rădăcinile românești ale lui Mircea Eliade*, 2: 378-379.

which places it under the sign of *fiction*. Rather Eliade gives us a "collage", than an accurate historical account.<sup>11</sup>

We ask again: why does the author have *all the time the feeling that he is wasting his energies in a world he does not belong to* (Eliade, *Jurnalul Portughez și alte scrieri* 1: 117)?<sup>43</sup> Simply because Eliade writes not one, but two books, at the same time. The former is *not his*, it "disgusts" and exhausts him. The latter, inserted in the text of the former, contains the *hidden* message he had uncovered in the history under whose terror he was living. He strongly believes that it is his *duty* to convey this message to his *compatriots*. Not different is the significance of Eliade's work as a whole, i.e., deciphering the necessarily sacred, exoterical, non-chronological meaning, in the amorphous configuration of a definitely profane, exoterical, and eventful reality.

Eliade absolutely loathes writing *Salazar*, because its historical exegetical "cover", so alien to him, blots out the more important symbolic message.<sup>12</sup> In an entry in the *Portuguese Journal*, dated 5 January 1945, we find the full confirmation of the author's real intentions, together with the repudiation of any diachronic reading of his texts, as against an essentially hermeneutic approach:

After reviewing all my theoretical and erudite writings, I realize that I have never done history, that I have never written like a historian. Instead, I have been always preoccupied with deciphering and promoting the sense of a certain ritual, of a custom, or of a literary work. Their evolution, specifying their stages, etc., have never interested me. (1: 285)

*Salazar* did not reach its addressees, not only because his own countrymen were not „on the same wavelength" with him, at that confuse historical moment, when the message was sent, but also because the text could not keep up with a history that was rapidly moving to its foreseeable dénouement, leaving little hope for the eastern part of Europe, of which – unlike Portugal, born under a luckier geopolitical star – Romania was part of. The bridges, which Eliade threw between the two Latin nations, – located, as they were, at the margins of Latinity – represent his last, direct involvement in the destiny of his own country. Until the moment of complete estrangement came, at the end of his Portuguese stay, Eliade, like Cioran, carried on feeling „sick of Romania”, although the fever was getting lower!

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<sup>11</sup> Even if a postmodern reading of Eliade's book can be done, with the benefit of pure speculation only, the idea of a solid bibliography that conditions a piece of fiction, makes us think, no matter how extravagant the association may be, of *Bibliografia generală*, by Mircea Horia Simionescu!

<sup>12</sup> There is another book by Eliade, which circulates under a title totally alien to its content. It is his famous *Traité d'Histoire des religions*, whose title was imposed by Gustave Payot, the editor, whom the author was unable to convince that the *Treatise* „is not a history, but a morphology of religious phenomena.” See Mircea Eliade, *Preface*, 1: 6.

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*English version by Remus Bejan*

