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The Birth of the Myth of the Unaffiliated Sociologist.

Was Dimitrie Gusti (just) a technician in the peasantist
government?



ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to focus on Professor Dimitrie Gusti's position within the Peasantist government at the beginning of 1930s. The author tries to gather necessary arguments against the belief which emerged in the fifties under the communist regime, and still valid until present days, that Gusti was promoted in the government of the National Peasantry Party because he was a good specialist, and not because of his political affiliation to this party. Besides the significant antecedents which prove the permanent and powerful connection with the elite of the National Peasantry Party since the beginning of the 1920s, he also had an interest in studying and modernizing the rural areas. The Professor's political behavior during his term might be described as loyalty and dedication towards fulfilling the governing programme of the party. More than that, even in 1934, when the National Peasantry Party was in opposition, Dimitrie Gusti, defended the accuracy of this party's political programme and participated in the conception of its new programme. The clarification of the professor's position within the Peasantry Party government is suitable especially for analyzing his ideological stance, which is a subject that still arises perfectly justifiable in current debates. This analysis is legitimate not only for clearing the Professor's position, but also for shedding light on the activity of the National Peasantry Party.

KEYWORDS:

Dimitrie Gusti, monographic sociology, National Peasantry Party, political behavior, the rehabilitation of sociology

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It is not only recently that the sociologist's political commitment has come into question, but the manner and the seriousness of the commitment knew very different degrees of intensity over time. Leaving aside the ethical debate regarding the participation of contemporary sociologists in political and military processes (as it does not make the object of this study), we focus on some endeavours related to the political commitment of some sociologists of the interwar period. According to our research, these endeavours reflect to a significant degree the political values imposed upon or assumed by the historians of sociology. Obviously, no researcher can "escape" the culture and ideology in which they became investigators of sociology's past, but we believe that understanding *sine ira et studio* the context and history of the interwar sociologists' political commitment would sensibly reduce the risk of their image being distorted.

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AN EXEMPLARY MINISTER

In the history of Romanian sociology there is no shortage of sociologists with major political commitments during the interwar period. (We mention only between brackets that professor Petre Andrei (1891-1940) in Iași and professor Traian Brăileanu (1882-1947) were also ministers of education.) But the case of professor Dimitrie Gusti (1880-1955), the founder of the Romanian Social Institute and of the Bucharest Sociological School, definitely became the most controversial. This is why, in this study, we try to bring light on a matter related to the Professor's political commitment during the 1932-33 period, when he served as a minister. As we know, after King Carol II (1893-1953) dismissed (after only one year in office) the government of "technicians" led by the great historian Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) in June 1932, the National Peasants' Party, a centre-left party that had been born and grown strong after World War I, was called to govern. After Iorga's flawed governing, the first task of the new government was to prepare parliamentary elections, so that the country be led by a legitimate cabinet. All the more so because only such a government could implement the anti-crisis measures so greatly needed also in Romania.

Within the cabinet formed by Alexandru Vaida Voievod (1872-1950), the professor was invited to head the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Arts. As opposed to his colleagues, Gusti had never held any ministry office before. The professor kept his ministry office within all the Peasantist governments – after several reshuffles, including after the alternance of prime-ministers – from June 1932 until November 1933. During this period, the professor was a full member of the government, in the sense that he did not isolate himself in his projects related to his ministry, but he participated in the activity of the entire government. He supported several government proposals in entirely different fields than those of culture or education. We found neither that he was criticised by the old Peasantists regarding his activity, nor that his removal was proposed, not taking into account the rumour of his being replaced by professor Petre Andrei in the summer of 1932¹. But the years of the world economic crisis were accompanied by political crisis. Consequently, the Peasantist governing was also extremely turbulent.

Despite his undisputed ministerial record within a Peasantist government, starting from the 1960's, during the period when sociology was being restored², a belief started to prevail that Gusti had not been a Peasantist, because he did not have a PNT membership card, and that he had been an independent expert, a technocrat. Some might consider that clarifying this matter is as a mere technicality, but in our opinion, understanding the history of his political commitment brings us closer to understanding the political context in which the founder of the sociological school had to perform.

In order to shed some light on this matter, we will focus primarily on the period of the Peasantist governing, namely the 1932-1934 period, and the effects it had on Gusti's career. In our opinion, Gusti's behaviour can be explained only by analysing his actual and symbolic actions during that period, and not by analysing his later statements and the interpretations of those statements. (Obviously, these statements are important, but not for the beginning of the '30s. They are important for the privative context of the '50s, and this should make the object of

¹ GOLOPENȚIA 2010. 63.

² ROSTĂS 2018.

another study.) Therefore, in this paper we will present Gusti's activity after pledging allegiance to King Carol II.

It is true that Gusti did not become a minister as any regular Peasantist, by climbing the party hierarchy, by participating in election campaigns, by fighting the National Liberal Party, General Averescu's People's Party or Iorga's Democratic Nationalist Party etc. Yet, Gusti's actions during his first days in office were visibly very useful to the party. He initiated a series of talks with professional federations whose members had been affected by the economic crisis, he participated in the meeting of the Inter-University Council and had a meeting with the writers who had been awarded the national prize, in an attempt to relaunch this initiative that had been abandoned for several years, and, most of all, he started to visit the schools in Bucharest. Further on, he visited the country – he inspected schools, he participated in training courses for school inspectors in Pitești and for primary school teachers in Brașov.

But this activity of gathering information and *ad hoc* counselling did not have the sole purpose of obtaining data or of solving problems. His visits and meetings *were prepared, announced and in many occasions covered by the daily press*. This strategy of promoting his activity had a clear political objective: to illustrate the fact that schools of any level and the intellectuals, from primary school teachers to the great art or science authors, were going to find an effective and competent support under the new Peasantist government. After the general disappointment brought by Iorga's government of technicians, it was necessary to wake up the electorate of state employees in the education field from their lethargy. This is why Gusti, in the middle of summer and of the students' vacation, was visiting schools and pointing out in the press that this field that had suffered during the Iorga government needed reforms. This is a less known side of the sociology professor's activity, namely using the press to launch initiatives. Let us not forget that during his last years of studies in Berlin, between 1906 and 1908, Gusti was a very keen observer of the nature and purpose of the press.

It is well-known that Gusti did everything he could to promote his sociological school and his reform projects, including those related to the ministry. But precisely in order to accomplish these plans, he participated directly in the party election campaign in the summer of 1932, contributing to its victory. Therefore, Dimitrie Gusti was in no way neutral, but he entered the electoral battle in the Ilfov county alongside powerful Peasantist leaders such as Ion Mihalache (1882-1963) and Virgil Madgearu (1887-1940) who were running for the Chamber, while he himself was running for the Senate³. In this capacity, besides the publicity for the activity of the ministry, he followed the same path as the other candidates. He delivered electoral speeches, he participated in street gatherings. One event in which Gusti participated is worth mentioning exactly because it is characteristic of the interwar era.

It was an ordinary electoral PNT meeting which took place at the Eforie Hall in Bucharest. The opening speech was delivered by Gusti, who focused on the problems of his department under the circumstances of the crisis, pointing out that “a lot is being said about a finance and banking reform but so little about a school policy.” And this brought about the school crisis. Even though “education is compulsory, illiteracy soars to such an extent that yearly there are 300,000 children who do not go to school.” He went on and also named other vulnerabilities of the cultural activity in the country (“even though they have cooperatives and libraries, they

³ See the daily newspaper *Universul*, no. 183, July 6, 1932, 7.

don't know what to do with them"), or the problem of intellectual unemployment as a result of the university crisis. As Gusti did not use to attack anybody, there were no incidents during his speech. But Virgil Madgearu, the secretary general of the party, "attacked the liberal party accusing it of favouring the development of the big industry to the disadvantage of the little industry" and this generated an unpredicted event. During the speech of the secretary general, at some point somebody shouted "Fire!", "Out!" People got into a great panic and started to run scared towards the exit. Peace was restored with difficulty. Some of the citizens did not return to the hall. After the meeting, leaving the Eforie Hall, the National Peasantists protested in front of the offices of the *Adevărul* and *Dimineața* newspapers"⁴, reported the Bucharest daily *Universul*.

Even from the analysis of this electoral campaign we can point out Gusti's commitment to the Peasantist policy. What we can also point out is the fact that in this new capacity he did not alter his actions or the discourse that he used to employ at the cross-party meetings of the Romanian Social Institute. We add here a detail which has to do with the political and electoral logic: after the failure of a technocrat government, after the press had chastised this type of governing, Gusti's biggest mistake would have been to engage in electoral battle as an unaffiliated technician.

As we know, the National Peasants' Party won the elections in the summer of 1932, and Gusti took a seat in the Senate of the Peasantist power, besides his minister position. His activism did not wane after the end of the elections campaign, on the contrary.

Throughout his entire period in office, he was concerned with the situation of those members of the teaching staff who had been wronged previously. As a university professor and a dean from 1929 and until he was appointed a minister, he knew first-hand the students' and graduates' life during the economic depression and he worked towards improving their situation. Given that his ministry also included the departments of religious affairs and arts, Gusti did not hesitate to enter into dialogues with the members of the church and with the members of the world of literature and arts. He did not leave these fields to be managed exclusively by the general directors of the respective departments. To determine Gusti's efficiency as a minister judging by the number of dialogues and meetings with the representatives of these fields would be exaggerate. Nevertheless, what the press noted is significant: 70 meetings with associations of primary school teachers, secondary school teachers and graduates, almost 30 meetings on university- and student-related matters, over 20 meetings with representatives of several churches in Romania, almost 50 meetings with representatives of cultural associations, of visual artists and of musical institutions and, of course, with writers and playwrights. Under the circumstances of the world economic crisis, which impacted also upon Romania, and of the austerity measures, Gusti managed to improve the situation of the underprivileged in his system and even to prevent the closing down of some cultural institutions, and he managed to set up new ones. It is enough to mention the setting up of the prizes for young writers or the Book Month. But Gusti's commitment does not end with the tasks of his ministry. He participated in almost 50 more protocol meetings, time-consuming solemnities, stressful parliamentary debates than the other members of the government. We should also recall his foreign mission to Italy, for the inauguration of the Romanian School in Rome. On this occasion, Gusti met not only with his counterpart, Francesco Ercole, the Minister of National Education, but also with Prime-Minister Benitto Mussolini,

⁴ *Universul*, July 12, 1932, 12.

with King Victor Emanuel the 3rd and with Pope Pius the 11th. A separate study is needed to cover this almost two-week visit to Italy of minister Gusti.

Besides the task of doing away with the problems brought about by the previous government, Gusti initiated a series of innovating actions, beyond the meticulously documented legislative proposals, beyond the research on the education system included in the volume of documents⁵ edited one year after the completion of his term. This feverish reforming activity occasioned by his position as a minister had only one unforeseen (although predictable) consequence: the monographists, the members of the Bucharest Sociological School, those with whom he had been exploring the Romanian rural reality for seven years, starting as early as 1925, felt abandoned, lacking the Professor's direct guidance. Gusti did not forget his first and foremost commitment to researching the reality with the help of the young people he trained. He helped the monographists with scholarships abroad, by financing the Făgăraș summer camp (called "writing camp"), which also offered additional field research opportunities in Drăguș.⁶ But Gusti's absence from amidst the young monographists generated a sentiment of crisis, something which his most important assistant, Henri H. Stahl (1901-1991) later on called "the monography crisis".⁷

Naturally, this situation partially illustrated the well-known conflict between his calling as a scientist and his calling as a politician, but Gusti was convinced, as any East-European intellectual, that thorough reforms, science must help society escape underdevelopment. For this reason, he thought that politics offered him the chance to try to accomplish as many of his reform ideals as possible. And, because generally his ideas coincided with the ideas of the National Peasants' Party (which at that time was considered a centre-left party), and because the party supported him, he also supported this government until it forwarded its resignation to the king in 1933.

A PEASANTIST WITHOUT AN OFFICE

After the November 1933 elections, when Gusti lost the ministry office, one could believe that he distanced himself from the PNT, especially because on 1 December 1933 King Carol II appointed him at the lead of the "Prince Carol" Royal Cultural Foundation. But Gusti's gesture to gather and publish, in 1934, the documents of his term as a minister in the great volume "A year at the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Arts" shows his belief that his work in that government had not been in vain, even if only for this collection of documents, useful to anyone who would follow him at the Ministry of Education.

In the introduction to this volume, which includes the doctrine and legislative work of his ministry, Gusti clearly states his commitment to the peasantist values, and for this reason we will quote this entire part:

"In the «Program Manifesto» of the National Peasants' Party of 27 June 1932, the chapter regarding school reads as follows: «Citizens, the National Peasants' Party will strive

⁵ GUSTI 1934.

⁶ ROSTÁS 2013.

⁷ STAHL 1981. 195-272.

and make all sacrifice in order to set up a school suitable to the current needs of the country. The primary education will be strengthened and will have a practical nature, being closely connected to the local life, so that it prepares the children for the life requirements and the environment in which they live. The decrease of the number of illiterates shall be pursued through all possible means. Higher peasant schools will be created to train the natural leaders of the villages and to improve village life. The secondary education will be regulated and improved so that its graduates can be useful to society right away and so that not all of them seek to go to Universities. The vocational education will be developed and focused on meeting the requirements of the social and economic life. The development of private education under the control of the state will be encouraged. Universities will have a greater creation capacity and also a greater impact on society. Besides school, the National Peasants' Party will oversee through all means the development of the people's education through the cooperation of all the state services with the great cultural societies of the country.

The National Peasants' Party will do its best to restore to the Church its great role of comforting the soul and of guiding the believers on the right path, while giving its servants the respect and holiness they should enjoy in order to set the national life on pillars of trust and healthy traditions».⁸

It is of great significance that in 1934, while in opposition, Gusti participated in the debates of this party's elite – within the framework of the National Peasants' Party Circle of Studies. We find him in a volume of projects elaborated by 20 PNT personalities, such as Mihail Ralea (1896-1964), Armand Călinescu (1893-1939), Virgil Madgearu (1887-1940), Ioan Răducanu (1884-1964), Petre Andrei (1891-1940), D. R. Ioanițescu (1885-1970), Grigore Gafencu (1892-1957) and others, each approaching a field in which they had already risen to prominence. Professor Gusti wrote about the prospects and the necessity of organizing the culture, carrying on the ideas he promoted while he was a minister and included in the above-mentioned volume. To conclude, during the above-mentioned years, Gusti's behaviour transpired not only ideological consistency, but also an organizational involvement with the party.⁹

THE PEASANTIST PAST OF AN INDEPENDENT SOCIOLOGIST

One can question if this PNT affiliation had any roots in the past. Formally, it had none. We have not seen any document so far that would confirm his membership to the National Peasants' Party. But if the membership card is not of real consequence, and if we follow Gusti's (more or less discreet) involvement in politics, we learn, from Keith Hitchins' *Rumania 1866-1947*, in chapter *Parties*, that the National Peasants' Party, whose initial leaders had been bank officers and cooperative workers, started to become popular with the intellectuals, as early as the beginning of the '20s, thanks to its commitment to "political democracy and social reform": "Among them there were notably Dimitrie Gusti, the well-known social anthropologist, and the members

⁸ GUSTI 1934. VI-VII.

⁹ *Rapoarte*, 1934.

of the Romanian Social Institute that he had set up in Bucharest in 1921; Virgil Madgearu, an economist who would become one of the lead theoreticians of peasantism[...].¹⁰ If during this period Gusti's peasantist activity had not been visible, as a founder, in 1918, of the *Association for Science and Social Reform*, which later became the *Romanian Social Institute*, his notoriety rose very quickly within the capital city's intellectual and political milieu, precisely because of the cross-party atmosphere he imposed at the debates of this institution. Also notorious is the fact that Virgil Madgearu, an old friend since the time they studied together in Germany, was Gusti's second in command in setting up all these institutions. It is clear that the two shared an identical interest in the village and in the rural matter, but while Gusti, by his nature and calling, tended towards promoting scientific thinking in politics, towards researching the rural realities, the economics professor Virgil Madgearu chose the political organization and action. Therefore, it is not by chance that when the Peasantists came to power, in December 1928, Gusti was invited as a president in the boards of the Autonomous House of State Monopolies, of the National Office of Cooperatives, of the Radio Broadcasting Company and, finally, to hold a minister position.

From this point of view, Mihail Manoilescu (1891-1950)'s memoirs, written in 1944 are a more than interesting document. A renowned engineer and economist, an ideologist of Romanian corporatism with a difficult political career in the interwar period (from fervently supporting King Carol II to contesting him and then to becoming his foreign secretary), Mihail Manoilescu (1891-1950) recalls with admiration Gusti's activity at the Romanian Social Institute.

„As any important institution – Manoilescu wrote – our Institute also had at its origin *one man*.

Gusti was an animator; a dynamic and likeable animator. This is why he did not launch a trend but he set up a beautiful intellectual display where, with his captivating delicacy, he managed to gather together those that would become, at the end of the war, the most important intellectual personalities of the country.

The malicious used to say about Gusti that he has the gift of discovering and attracting the future ministers to the Institute! But this joke was actually an homage; because encouraging *at the right time* the people who carry great hidden virtues within them is no small merit.

I started to work there in 1919 and I stayed there forever active and full of initiative, during the *heroic era* of the institute which ended once Gusti joined the National Peasants' Party.

Gusti could not have made a greater mistake than that of joining a party, *be that any party*. His great virtue and all his charm lied in his *neutrality*, this is why, precisely the day when – according to the well-known phrase – he “*got his political colours*”, he lost his own colours and his uniqueness which made him fulfil a true *national function*.”¹¹

Yet, from the nostalgic description of Gusti's period of neutrality one can clearly understand Manoilescu's antipathy towards Madgearu and the party he represented:

¹⁰ HITCHINS 2013. 428.

¹¹ MANOILESCU 1993. 49-50.

“What made the beauty of the committee meetings is that, exactly as with Junimea, they were held orderly, at each of the members’ houses, in an intimate atmosphere where only Madgearu’s outbursts would spoil the general mood.

But it is fair to admit that at the Institute, even impetuous Madgearu left aside politics for quite a while, until the fatal day when he attracted Gusti into his party and in doing so he ruined the house where we all felt so well...”¹²

It is clear, and Manoiilescu’s memoirs prove it, that Madgearu’s influence and confidence were a factor in Gusti’s accepting political dignities before entering the government. But equally clear is the fact that Manoiilescu did not realize that Gusti’s neutrality was closely connected to the rural themes. In other words: Gusti hoped that his reform ideas would be accomplished by entering a government which agreed with him.

Therefore, even though he knew he needed to preserve the Romanian Social Institute as a cross-party scientific forum, Gusti was at the same time contributing to clarifying the party ideology as a supporter, without getting involved in the actual party life. On the other hand, the RSI actually was a cross-party institution given the activity of its departments and the series of conferences which were very renowned within the intellectual and political milieu of interwar Bucharest.

What is certain is that within the history of the National Peasants’ Party we have not found so far any documents regarding Dimitrie Gusti’s party activity, while his activity as an organizer of the Romanian Social Institute’s conference and of the monographic sociology research was abundantly recorded. Furthermore, Dimitrie Gusti’s style of maintaining good relations with the representatives of all the important parties was well known and recognized even by his opponents.

This style, as well as his proved managerial capability qualified him for the positions he occupied after the appointment of the PNȚ government, besides, of course, the guarantee of his loyalty as a supporter of the Peasantist movement.

It is worth pointing out that Gusti never used offensive words regarding his opponents, be they persons or parties, neither when he was a minister, nor even during the electoral campaign. Moreover, he even organized a consultation meeting with those who preceded him at the lead of the Ministry of Education.

And yet, it is inexplicable that at some point there was this almost general consensus that Gusti had been only a technocrat, a technician in the National Peasants’ Party government during 1932-33. After reading the studies on Gusti’s activity published after the end of his term, nobody stated or suggested that he was incongruous with the PNȚ Government, whether he was a member or not. 25 years after starting his university career, there appeared consistent studies regarding his multilateral activity signed by people with whom he worked closely such as Mircea Vulcănescu (1904-1952), Henri H. Stahl (1901-1991), Octavian Neamțu (1910-1976), Ion Zamfirescu (1907-2001), Traian Herseni (1907-1980), Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasa (1885-1989) and a series of politicians, but nobody disputed the nature of the professor’s participation in the Peasantist government.¹³

¹² MANOILESCU 1993. 50.

¹³ *Omagiu* 1936.

After World War II, while sociology was struggling to survive, neither Gusti nor others mentioned the period in which he was a minister¹⁴. The professor only mentioned publicly and positively the monographic sociology research, the Law of Social Welfare and the importance and benefits of the International Congress of Sociology (even though it did not take place, because of the outbreak of the war).

THE (EXPLICABLE) DWINDLING MEMORY OF THE PEASANTIST COMMITMENT

After 1948, that is after sociology was banished from the university and from among the social sciences, after the Academy of Romania became the Academy of the Popular Republic of Romania, where Gusti was no longer allowed, for almost ten years, Gusti was mentioned only as a representative of the bourgeoisie-enforced sociology, as a Peasantist minister and other epithets of the time.

Gusti's public activity actually started to be re-evaluated within the wider context of revalorizing the cultural heritage initiated by the cultural authorities of the communist party at the beginning of the '60s. The studies meant to rehabilitate Gusti and his school also take into consideration the matter of introducing his political activity. Within this context, there appears for the first time the idea that Gusti would have become a member of the Peasantist governments because of his scientific prestige, while he was not even a member of the PNȚ. Those familiar with the respective period realize that the authors, Ovidiu Bădina, a young researcher who had studied in Moscow and Octavian Neamțu, a faithful co-worker of professor Gusti's since 1934, in order to have their book published, they were forced to „gloss over” the past and offer an image that the ideological authorities and the censorship could accept. This implied an acceptable interpretation of some facts from the past, capable to determine the censors to allow the problematic fragment. Thus, for a comparison with the above-sketched reasons for appointing Gusti to the three public offices, please find below the authors' interpretation:

“The tasks that Gusti received during the period 1929-1930 – the Radio Broadcasting Company, the Autonomous House of Monopolies, the National Office of Cooperatives – corresponded to his sociological, statistical and legal training achieved during his studies and developed creatively through the constructive activity he had been carrying out for a decade in the country. The radio stations were, in the culture policy program elaborated by Gusti, one of the most efficient instruments of dissemination for the national culture. He contributes to building a national broadcasting program and comes up with the idea of the Radio University.”¹⁵

The glossing over intensifies when it comes to explaining why he entered the Peasantist government. It is suggested that he was not convinced of the necessity of this step and that this brought him only trouble in the long run:

„He did not accept to become a minister for vain ambition, but because he had a reform program for the public education to accomplish. The circumstances in which he accepted

¹⁴ Rostás 2021.

¹⁵ Bădina & NEAMȚU 1967. 89-90.

to enter the National Peasantist government led by Al. Vaida-Voievod and the part N. Titulescu played in his decision are known from G. Vlădescu-Răcoasa's accounts. Gusti hesitated a lot. The document entitled «Should I run for office», in which his brother Anastase is showing him the reasons that would justify him to enter the government, that is to implement his own views in the field of culture policy, reflects the numerous considerations that Dimitrie had raised in his dialogues with his brother. In one year and four months, during that governing period, he was part of four governments, which hindered his activity very much. Moreover, the government crisis found him every time away from Bucharest, sometimes away from the country, in Rome or in Germany, on official missions...¹⁶

After thus setting the atmosphere for approaching the issue of the ministry position, the authors quote Gusti's own testimony, without specifying the date it was written:

“Gusti writes about this later on: ‘I received the proposal to take part in a Peasantist government, even though I was not a member of the Peasants’ Party, being offered first the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then, after I refused, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Arts. My hesitation lasted for a few days’; ‘...The one who determined me to abandon my two-day hesitation to enter the government was N. Titulescu, with whom I was in a friendly relationship. He encouraged me to accept the proposal especially because, being in the government, I could help him in his policy to bring Romania closer to the Soviet Union, a policy which, as we know, was considered very bold at that time.’¹⁷

This argument was obviously a manoeuvre to make Gusti's commitment to a Peasantist government acceptable to the cultural authorities of the time.

We quoted these paragraphs not in order to blame or expose the authors of the volume, but in order to show the reasons why they presented Gusti's time in office in this way. First of all, we should point out that in the end any history, even those considered scientific, are intellectual constructions. Furthermore, within the context of the ideological domination exerted by the Romanian Workers' Party (after 1965 – the Romanian Communist Party), only naïve intellectuals understood the “reclaiming of the cultural legacy” at the beginning of the ‘60s as an act of justice. This decision was actually a manoeuvre to find new legitimacy for the single party. And this widening of the legitimacy base did not also imply an objective study of the interwar political system or of the historical parties, and therefore neither the study of their governments. Even a neutral description of the political parties, of the role of personalities, of the international context - not to mention of the National-Peasantists, who were chastised more than the National-Liberals - was unthinkable. It is understandable why the authors needed a distorted (not to say hilarious) presentation of Gusti's involvement in the PNTȚ Government. A minor moment with Nicolae Titulescu (1882-1941) was blown out of proportions expressly because the renowned foreign officer supported the revival of the relations with the Soviet Union, hence his memory was revered.

One wonders what was the source that supported the assertion that Gusti was rather a specialist, a technician in a government of politicians. The source was Gusti himself. But at the same time one should also wonder when and in what context did he deny his membership to

¹⁶ BĂDINA & NEAMȚU 1967. 90-91.

¹⁷ Bădina & NEAMȚU. 1967. 91.

the National Peasants' Party. The answer is revealing for those who know what the weight of a non-communist political past was for an intellectual after World War II. In volume VII of his *WORKS* edited in 1993, after the change of regime, Ovidiu Bădina gathers, in a chapter suggestively called "Texts removed from D. Gusti, *WORKS*, Vol. VI", the memorandums Gusti sent the central party and state authorities between 1946 and 1954. In a period when the entire intellectual elite was more or less blamed – many being arrested and sentenced – for cooperating with the regime from before 23 August 1944, it was natural that each would look for "mitigating circumstances" in their past. Therefore, it is understandable why Gusti insisted on this detail, that he was not a formal member of the PNT. It is worth quoting here these fragments from the memorandums written after 1948 also in order to exemplify the self-defence discourse of the intellectual whose freedom was threatened:

"I was not a member of the club of liberal, conservative or peasantist parties, because fortunately, on the one hand I had no ambition what so ever to raise to prominence and on the other hand, because, as an observer of the Romanian public life, I realized their true value. Yet, in 1932, I received the proposal to take part in a Peasantist government, even though I was not a member of the Peasants' Party, being offered first the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then, after I refused, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Arts"¹⁸

Further to the recommendation of prime-minister Dr. Petru Groza (1884-1958), Gusti elaborates more on the previous memorandum, and regarding the matter of his participation in the Peasantist government, he does not change the essence, but adds a few more sentences:

"In one year and four months I participated in four governments – the ministerial crisis always found me away from Bucharest – which, naturally, hindered a lot my activity. Nevertheless, I managed to leave behind enough studies and legislative proposals to make up a 1562-page volume, published in 1934."¹⁹

In 1950, after not having received his pension for four months and after having been evacuated from his own house, Gusti sends a shorter memorandum to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Teohari Georgescu (1908-1976), in which, to the known content, he adds:

"I was part of the 1932-33 governments as a *specialist*, as a *technician*, not as a politician..."²⁰

In a later version, undated, he brings a nuance meant to also set himself apart from the Peasantist politics:

"In 1932 I received a proposal to be part of an election government in my sole capacity as a scientist and technician, not as a member of the party who formed the government, and of which I was not a member."²¹

The last letter – sent in September 1954, this time to his former student, Miron Constantinescu (1917-1974), an important leader of the Communist Party – published by Bădina – does not bring any new phrasing regarding his status in the above-mentioned governments, but recalls his actions after 23 August 1944, which demonstrated a deep understanding of the newly created

¹⁸ GUSTI 1993. 80.

¹⁹ GUSTI 1993. 87.

²⁰ GUSTI 1993. 97.

²¹ GUSTI 1993. 99.

situation. After all, this last letter is the desperate cry of an elderly professor, marginalised and ill, who continued to be followed and threatened, even after Stalin's death:

"...I insistently and with all my heart ask you, in your official capacity as a vice-president of the Council of Ministers and as a member of the C.C. of the PMR, to energetically intervene in order for me to be left in peace to carry my illnesses unbothered – please show that you knew me from when you obtained your BA, and then when you prepared your PhD and from when you carried out your activity in villages, through papers and studies at the height of the dictatorial regime, at the University and in the field.

Please take into consideration my old age, my illnesses, especially my heart and my nerves, under all their shapes, and tell everybody interested in my humble person, tell them, please, the Truth.

Let me be removed *once and for all* from the list of those prosecuted for faults; eight years of continuous errors and of troubled and tormented life are enough. Thank you!
D. Gusti"²²

Under such political circumstances anyone would try to diminish the importance of the role for which they were prosecuted, especially if their arguments formally had a cover.

The same strategy was used also by the authors quoted above, Ovidiu Bădina (1932-1999) and Octavian Neamțu, in order to avoid the danger of having the censorship refuse the presentation on Dimitrie Gusti's sociological work and his school. As the communist regime remained firm in accusing the interwar governments, the idea that Gusti did not agree with the PNTȚ ideology and that he had been rather a technocrat in the 1932-1933 government was perpetuated.

Some might consider that this perpetuation is of no great consequence. Yet, we are of the opinion that not the formal enrolment but the commitment to a governmental program and the solidarity with the government are the ones matter. Gusti was not the only one in government structures who was not a party member, neither before nor after World War II. Much more important are the ideological consequences of Gusti's participation in this government of 1932-33. But the research regarding the matter of which "-ism" can apply to minister Gusti's activity is not yet satisfactorily concluded, and it does not fall upon this study to bring ideological clarifications. Also, we cannot approach the real consequences the ministry position had on the Bucharest Sociological School. Nevertheless, as we previously mentioned, the hypothesis regarding the "crisis of the monography" needs further clarifications.

CONCLUSION

This paper gathered the arguments necessary for demonstrating that the belief which started in the 1950s and was perpetuated until the present day is unfounded. According to this belief, Dimitrie Gusti was promoted within the National Peasants' Party thanks to his prestige as a specialist, as a technician and in no way because he was a Peasantist. The history preceding this government demonstrates the strong and permanent ties the professor had with the elite of this party starting as early as the '20s, to which the scientific interest for the rural world is to be added. But the clearest proof of his political views lies in his political behaviour during the

²² GUSTI 1993. 103.

Peasantist governing, which can be described as loyal and dedicated to carrying out the program of the party. Moreover, even in 1934, when the PNTJ fought in opposition, Dimitrie Gusti invoked the justness of its government program and participated in the drawing up of its new program. Clarifying the Professor's status within the Peasantist government is useful especially for the analysis of his ideological views, which continue to raise justified controversies. These investigations are worth carrying on because not only Dimitrie Gusti's views, but neither the National Peasants' Party's views have been adequately explained.

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