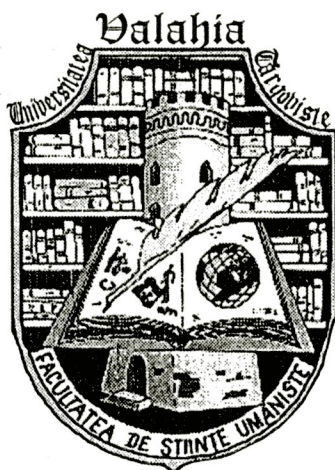


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CHARLES TILLY, *REVOLUȚIILE EUROPENE (1492-1992)-*
(*EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS – 1492-1992*),
EDITURA POLIROM, 2002

Review

Nadia Manea*

The Polirom Publishing House has published the essay written by Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions (1492-1992)*, translated by Victor Cherata, *Revoluțiile europene (1492-1992)*. It was first published in 1993, in the series “Building a New Europe”, initiated by five publishing houses of different languages and nationalities from Munich, Oxford, Barcelona, Rome and Bari, Paris, under the supervisor of the French historian Jacques Le Goff. The title of the series – J. Le Goff underlines in *Foreword* – aims to shed light on building the Europe without dissimulating the difficulties inherited and without concealing the enmities, conflicts and divisions and inner contradictions, taking into account the fact that the participation in the European movement should be achieved in full knowledge of the Past and in the perspective of the Future. (pp. 5)

Certainly, what can better point out the wide range of contradictions, from the simple division to the open conflict than the revolutions problem area investigated by C. Tilly, Professor at New School for Social Research from New York, where he is the Head of the Center for Social Changes Studies. According to the confessions made in the *Preface*, the author considered as an easy project, a book on the European Revolutions. The reasons of this appreciation were: the author had studied the History of the European States as well as the changing character of European Revolutions and he thought of conceiving the book according to an academic course strategy.

Not only had the author been able to hand in the work in time, but he realized that he couldn't write the book in the absence of a general theory of the Revolution, i.e. exactly what the author suggested in **Chapter One – Conflict, Uprising and Revolution** – and the last chapter – *Revolutions of the Past, Present and Future*.

Chapter Two – Europe's Changes – deals with a general sketch of the political social changes and their impact on the revolutionary situations from 1492 up to now.

In **Chapter Three – Revolutions Uprising and Civil Wars in the Low Countries** – the author resorts to preliminary situations from these countries, the Iberian Peninsula and Balkan Peninsula, starting from 1492.

Chapters Four and Five, - *The British Isles and France and its regions* – allow the American historian to present his researches regarding the Revolutions he knows best, i.e. from the British Isles, especially of the XVIIth century and France, especially after 1750.

The background of 500 years of revolutions is completed with **Chapter Six – Russia and its Neighbors** – where the analysis focuses on the XXth century conflicts. Besides the observations and conclusions already accepted by the historical literature, C. Tilly formulates new interpretations: “We can notice that the biggest towns of the world were situated outside Europe, whereas the biggest European cities were under the Islamic

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influence”, proof of the fact that “It was not Europe that dominated the world; in 1492, China had huge influence on the Orient. The Islamic territories and seas were situated on side and the other of the main economical and cultural trade routes of the world”; “A historical perspective on the vindications after 1492 must lay the emphasis on the major processes in Europe: the transformation of the states and the capitalist development” (pp.48); “in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, the Protestants represented the most serious threat for the powerful centralized monarchy” (pp. 162); “Between 1620-1650, almost every year broke out an army insurrection in France” (pp. 170); “The access of the British Parliament to the external and internal trade routes of London was a crucial advantage in a world where the military force was starting to depend on the financial one” (pp. 146).

In the states resulted from the disintegration of the Soviet Union, those who used to have important positions in the Communist Party, now exert their power in the name of national sovereignty or use their connections and access to the goods in order to build new careers of entrepreneurs. Starting from the French Revolution and analysing the events from Eastern Europe in 1989, C. Tilly proposes a more precise definition of the Revolution: “a transfer by force of State power, in which at least two distinct adversary groups formulate incompatible vindications concerning the control of the State, and an important part of the population approves of the vindications of each group”. (pp. 20)

Taking into consideration the hypothesis that “the revolutions are submitted to same others laws, different from those that act in the case of ordinary forms of political change”, and comparing the revolutions (very inspired!) with the “traffic jams”, the author concludes: “there can't be formulated a general theory either for revolution or «traffic jams», any unique model of revolutions being always undermined by the «unsuitable» cases”. (pp. 18, 19, 20)

And yet, the historians can study the revolutions. Consequently, C. Tilly proposes two components whose existence demonstrates that a simple uprising can be considerate a revolution: *a revolutionary situation* (caused by three convergent aspects: the appearance of the vindicators who claim for the control of State, the adherence of the population and the inability of action of the rulers), *a revolutionary consequence* (new power-holders make their appearance). (pp. 21, 22, 27)

We must, also, point out the rejection of *teleology* by the historian in the revolution analyses: “the historians who deal with England in the XVIIth century, France in the XVIIIth century or Russia in the XIXth century and the first half of the XXth century are tempted to consider these period of time as preliminaries for the great revolutions, which took place in those times”. (pp. 29)

We recognize here o kind of approach well-known to the Romanian historians, especially after World War II. Unfortunately, we can't attribute the same informative and interpretative valences of Tilly's work concerning the Romanian and Balkan history. The history of this area is present in the chapters consecrated by the author to Hungary and the Balkan Peninsula. We would like to reveal some negative aspects connected to the historical terminology. Probably the translator, not only by the author, can also generate this situation. Thus, expressions such as: “the kings from Balkans”, “the power of noblemen”, “the Polish-Lithuanian Empire”, “Russia-monarchic state”, raise the question of a misuse of the historical terminology. Than, the author doesn't precise what the limits of Balkans are.

Besides the fact that we have no specification that Romania would be situated in Balkans, at the end of World War I, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Hungary were

considered by the author parts of the Balkan Peninsula. Referring to Romania's history, we remark the lack of a few data: the Romanian Orthodoxy is absent from an enumeration where some other religious divisions are present (Muslim, Roman-Catholic, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodoxy, Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Unitarianism) (pp. 102), the uprising of 1514 was organized only by Hungarian peasants (pp. 104), during the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 "there took place insurrections in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Thessalia and Crete", "Bulgarians joint the Russian army", "Romania, Montenegro and Serbia got their independence", without mentioning any Romanian military participation. (pp. 106)

The work contains a lot of tables with events presented chronologically, tables which, in our opinion, have the same qualities and limits like the periodisation: it offers landmarks, but it sacrifices the interpretation.

Warning that "the predominance of the conquests and competitions from the Balkans has faded away the differences between war and revolution" (pp. 101), the author renders in the table 3.4. (pp. 104-106) "the chronology of major revolutionary long terms situations from Balkans and Hungary, being represented only the important moments of the almost constant conflicts". (pp. 102)

Thus, besides the correct or partially correct information, such as: 1572-1574 – the uprising in Moldavia; 1594-1598 – uprisings in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania; 1655 – the seimens' uprising in Wallachia; 1784-1785 – the peasants' uprising in Transylvania; 1848-1849 – revolutions in Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Transylvania and Wallachia; 1888, 1907 – peasants' uprising in Romania; 1989-1991 – the downfall of the communist regimes in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. We can, also, find out incorrect information: repeated uprisings in Wallachia, Moldavia and neighboring regions – 1683-1699; wars of independence in Moldavia and Wallachia – 1821-1824, 1848; war of independence in Romania in 1909.

Initially, concerning the independence of Romania, we supposed the date to be a misprint; later on, the author's commentaries convinced us that the bibliography he had studied was not good enough. So that, as concerns the author's interpretations of the seimens' uprising, we assume a certain confusion with the uprising during Mihnea the IIIrd against the Ottoman Empire.

We also notice that the number of victims of the uprising of 1907 (about 10,000) is quite close to the figure used by the communist historiography. In the same year, C. Tilly thinks that Romania was "a state relatively independent...caught between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Ottoman Empire". (pp. 107, 108)

Regarding the downfall of the communist regions "that one in Romania was the most revolutionary even if not through its consequences". For the events of 1989, C. Tilly uses the appreciations "doubtful" for Romania, "uncertain" for Hungary, and "peripheric" for Albania, Bulgaria and Poland. (pp. 109, 244)

King Ludovic of Hungary is presented as "member of Habsburg dynasty". (pp. 103) In reality, Ludovic IInd was Wladislaw Jagiello's son, really married to Maria de Castilia, sister of Ferdinand of Habsburg and Carol Quintus. Formulating the above-mentioned observations, we have considered ourselves on the same honest and vulnerable position with C. Tilly.

We have taken into consideration the author's request according to which: "before the specialists in the history of a certain country reject the chronologies and, consequently,

the ideas of my book, I would like to ask them to establish, if these errors deny my general conclusions about tendencies and differences”. (pp. 31)

As for us, we have considered that a work, that through the suggested theoretical foundation, won't be ignored in the analyses of the revolutions from the western countries, and for the Eastern Europe it will stimulate the re-writing of the revolution history, can't present incorrect chronologies, which would affect negatively the comparative studies, focused on the principle of simultaneity.